Enid Blyton

B·E·D·T·I·M·E STORYBOOK

Enid Blyton

BEDTIME STORYBOOK

DRAGON BOOKS

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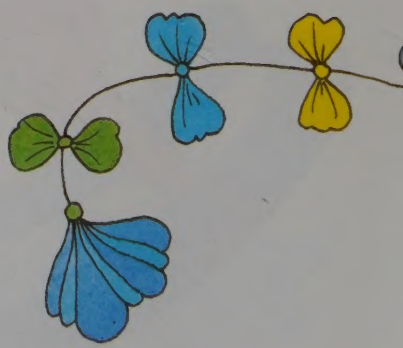

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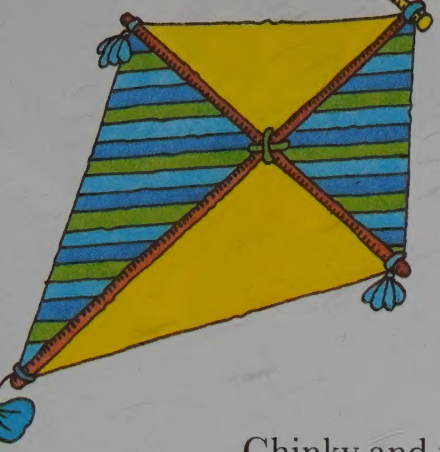

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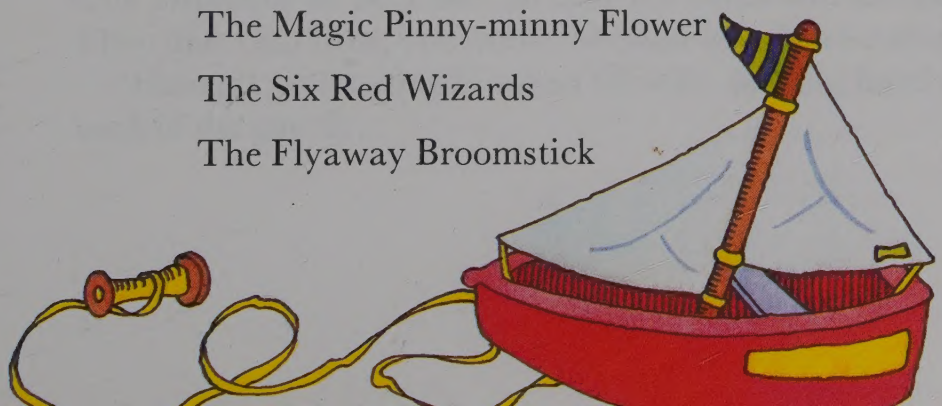

THE ENID BLYTON TRUST FOR CHILDREN

We hope you enjoy the stories in this book. Please think for a moment about those children who are too ill to do the exciting things you and your friends do.

Help them by sending a donation, large or small, to the ENID BLYTON TRUST FOR CHILDREN. The Trust will use all your gifts to help children who are sick or handicapped and need to be made happy and comfortable.

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Chinky and the poppy

Once there was a small elf called Chinky. She was so small that she could easily ride on a butterfly's soft back, or sit on a daisy's golden centre. She had a lovely time riding the white cabbage butterflies, and dipping her thin little arm into the mouth of a snapdragon flower to find the nectar hidden there.

One day she sat on a swinging leaf and talked to a brown and yellow fly above her head.

"You look like a bee," she said, "but I don't believe you are!"

"I'm not," said the fly, and he flew a little lower down. "I'm only *pretending* to be a bee, so that the birds will not eat me. They don't eat bees, you know, because bees have a sting."

"Haven't you a sting?" asked Chinky, looking hard at the back of the gay fly.

"No, I haven't," said the fly. "But don't tell anyone, will you? You see, if I dress myself exactly like a bee I am safe. I buzz around the world, and everyone says: 'Oh, here comes a bee'—but really I'm only a harmless fly!"

"That's rather clever of you," said the elf, swinging up and down on the leaf. "Nobody will catch you, and you will have a long and merry life."

But just then there was a movement in the damp grass below, and the big bulging eye of a green frog looked up. He had heard every word!

"Cr-r-r-roak!" he said. "So he's a fly, not a bee, is he? All right—just see me catch him!"

"Can't catch me! Can't catch me-eee!" hummed the fly hovering around the frog's head. The elf gave a squeal.

"Don't be silly! Don't go near him! Don't you know that he has a long tongue fixed to the front of his mouth, so that he can flick it out a long way! It's a very sticky tongue, too, and he'll catch you. Fly higher! Fly higher!"

The fly heard and was scared. He darted high into the air—only just in time, for the frog shot out his long, sticky tongue, and very nearly caught him.

"Z-z-z-z-z-zz!" said the fly, angrily, and flew up into the air and over the hedge.

"Nasty little spoil-sport," said the green frog to the elf. Chinky made a face at him, which was silly of her, because it made the frog very angry.

"You are small enough for a frog to eat, little Chinky!" said the frog, and his big eyes glared at her. "I shall catch *you* on the sticky end of my tongue—and gobble you up!"

Chinky jumped off the leaf with a scream. The frog shot out his tongue and just missed her. She ran away between the grasses as fast as ever she could. The frog leapt after her. He could jump very well indeed—very high, as high as the tallest grass there. The elf ran and ran, panting for breath. She was very frightened.

She came to the edge of the ditch. There was a cornfield beyond, with red poppies gleaming here and there.

"Help! Help!" called Chinky, hearing the frog leaping along behind her. A tall red poppy waved silken petals to her.

"Chinky! Jump inside me and I'll hide you with my petals!"

Chinky jumped—and the poppy took her into its middle, and folded scarlet petals over her tiny body. But the frog had seen where she went, and he stood below, shaking the stalk of the poppy as hard as ever he could.

"He's shaking me out, he's shaking me out!" cried Chinky,

holding on to the black stamens inside the poppy for all she was worth. The black pollen flew out and covered her from head to foot. She was soon as black as a sweep, for the pollen inside poppies is like soot.

The frog gave an extra big shake, and poor Chinky was jerked right out of the poppy. The frog looked up—and saw a completely black creature flying towards him. He stared in surprise and fright.

"A black imp!" he cried. "A black imp!"

Now the black imps are mischievous, and all creatures of the fields and woods are afraid of them. The frog leapt away fast, afraid that the black imp would catch him and tease him. But it was only Chinky, of course, covered with the black pollen from the poppy!

She laughed when she saw the frog leaping away and ran after him a little way. "Now you know how horrid it is to be chased!" she called, and went back to the red poppy.

"I'm very sooty," she said.

"It's going to rain," said the poppy. "The drops will wash you clean. Look out—here comes the first one."

Plop! A big raindrop fell beside the elf, and then another and another. One fell on her head, and ran down her tiny body, washing away the sooty pollen. In a moment or two she was quite clean again.

She leaned against the poppy stem, sheltering beneath the wide scarlet petals. "Thank you so much for letting me hide inside you," she said. "I wish I could do something for you in return."

"You can," said the poppy. "And I'll tell you what it is! You know, very soon my red petals will fall to the ground, and so will my black stamens. All that will be left of me will be my little green middle. But that is the most important part of me."

"Why?" asked Chinky, in surprise.

"Because I keep my seeds there," said the poppy. "Didn't

you know that? Yes—I keep my seeds there, and they slowly ripen in these hot summer days. Then, when they are black and dry and ripe, little holes, like windows, open all round my head, and the wind shakes them out."

"It all sounds very clever," said the elf.

"Now listen," said the poppy, "I am growing in the corn, and my seeds will be ripe before the corn is cut. The wind cannot get down to me to shake my seeds out when they are ripe, because the tall corn is above my head. I cannot bear my seeds to be wasted, little elf—so please will you come back in a few weeks' time, and shake my stalk for me—very hard indeed, just as the frog did just now? Then my seeds will fly out of my head, and will fall to the ground to grow into bright red poppies next year."

"Of course I'll come," said Chinky. "It would be a lovely thing to do. I'll watch your seeds fly out. It will be fun!"

"I hope you'll know me," said the poppy. "I shan't have any red petals, you know—I'll only be just a round head—not even green, as I am now, but hard and brown."

"I'll know you all right," said Chinky. "Goodbye till then!"

Off she went to tell her adventures to the white butterflies. If you want to see her, you'll know what to do—watch the red poppy in the cornfield, and when its seeds are ready to be shaken out, Chinky will be there, shaking the stem as hard as ever she can. I'd love to see her, wouldn't you?

Old Mister Meanie

There was once a rich old man who was very mean. He lived in a big house, had fourteen servants to look after him, and he always wore a very tall and shiny top-hat.

His name was Mister Meanie, and it was a very good name for him indeed. He owned all the little cottages around, and he made the gnomes and pixies who lived in them pay him a lot of money for rent.

One day little Silver-wings was ill. The doctor came, and she had to stay in bed. So she couldn't do any work, and didn't earn any money. Her medicines cost a lot, and poor Silver-wings was sad.

"I shan't be able to pay my rent," she said. "I must go to Mister Meanie and ask him to wait for a week or two. Then I can get the money if I work very hard. He is so rich that I am sure he won't mind waiting a week or two."

So she went to Mister Meanie and told him that she had been ill, and couldn't pay the rent just yet.

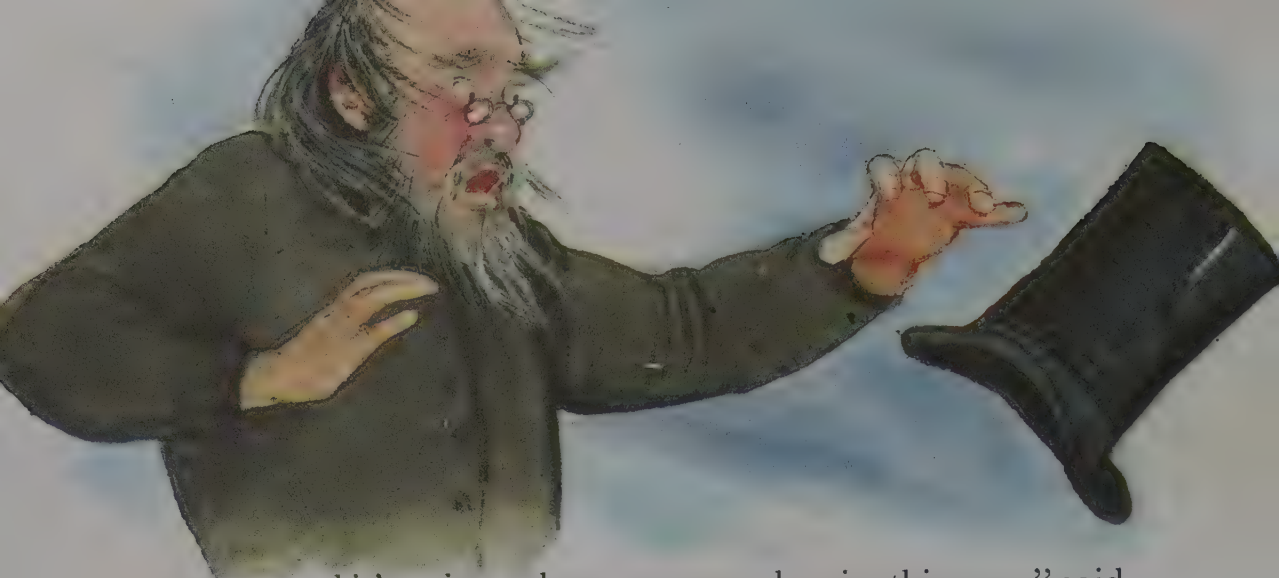
"But I will as soon as I can," she promised.

"I never heard of such a thing!" cried old Mister Meanie. "Asking me to let you off your rent! It's my house, isn't it, that you are living in? Well, you must pay the rent at once!"

"Mister Meanie, I'm not asking you to let me off the rent," said poor Silver-wings. "Only to let me have a little time to pay."

"Well, you can have till tomorrow, and that's all," said old Meanie. "If you don't pay me tomorrow, out you go!"

"But I can't leave the dear little garden I've made, and what about all my pigeons, and, oh dear, I do love my cherry



tree so, and it's going to have so many cherries this year," said Silver-wings, beginning to sob.

"You can leave your garden and your pigeons, and your cherries for somebody else," said Mister Meanie. "Now I'm going out for a walk. Good-bye."

He put his tall top-hat on his big round head and set off. Silver-wings went home crying.

On the way she met her friend, Light-foot.

"What's the matter?" said the pixie in surprise. "Why are you so upset?"

Silver-wings told him. He was very angry indeed. "I shall go at once and tell Mister Meanie what I think of him!" he said. "I shall, I shall!"

"But, Light-foot, that won't do any good," said poor Silver-wings. "He will only turn *you* out of your dear little cottage, too. Oh dear, I don't want to leave my nice little garden, and my white pigeons, and my beautiful cherry tree. I planted it myself from a cherry-stone, Light-foot."

"I know you did," said Light-foot, and he put his arms round Silver-wings to comfort her. "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go after old Meanie, and beg him to give you a whole week more to pay your rent, and somehow or other I will get the money for you! I'll do some of my pictures and sell them!"

Light-foot was very clever with his pencil and brush. He

could draw any of the pixies and fairies and gnomes in the village. He sold his pictures, and that was how he made his money.

Silver-wings felt grateful to him. "All right," she said. "You go and ask old Meanie. He's gone for a walk up the hill."

Light-foot sped after him. But old Meanie would not alter his mind at all. No—Silver-wings must pay him the very next day, or go away.

Light-foot turned away sadly. The wind was strong on the hill and fluttered his wings as he went down the hill-side. He heard a sudden cry from Mister Meanie and turned to see what had happened.

Meanie's big top-hat had blown off. It flew down the hill, bumping up and down as it went.

"Get it for me, get it!" cried Meanie. But Light-foot wasn't going to bother to do anything for such a mean old man. He just laughed loudly and went on his way.

But there, caught in a bush at the bottom of the hill, was old Mister Meanie's big top-hat. Light-foot stared at it. Then he took it and put it on his own head. It came right down over his nose! He looked very funny.

He danced into the village with the top-hat over his nose. Everyone laughed to see him.

Then Light-foot had a simply marvellous idea. It made him

chuckle loudly. He ran indoors, took off the top-hat, got out his paints, pencil and brushes, and set to work on a picture.

It was Mister Meanie's picture! Light-foot drew the old man's face—his big nose, his small eyes, his shaggy eyebrows, his long whiskers! Silver-wings came in to see it and she cried out in surprise.

"It's *exactly* like old Meanie! What are you going to do with the picture, Light-foot?"

"You'll see!" said Light-foot, painting in Meanie's rather big ears. "There—it's finished!"

Light-foot cut out his picture neatly—round the ears, round the chin—and there was old Mister Meanie's head, as large as life, exactly like him!

Light-foot pasted it on some wood. He stuck the piece of wood onto a post, and then put the top-hat on top, so that it really seemed as if Mister Meanie's head was there, crowned with his big top-hat.

"Now then—we'll take it to the fair on the common," said Light-foot. "I know the man who runs it. He will let me put up this picture of old Meanie, and charge people a penny a throw. There are a lot of people who would like to throw something very, very hard at old Meanie."

"Yes, old Mother Hubbard would," said Silver-wings. "Mister Meanie took so much money from her that for a whole week the cupboard was bare, and she and her dog had nothing to eat."

"And when Dame Tiptoe's baby was ill, Mister Meanie wouldn't let her off her rent for a week or two, and she couldn't have the doctor," said Light-foot. "So the baby nearly died. She would like to throw something at Meanie, too."

The two of them carried the funny picture and hat together up to the common, where the fair was to be held that day. Mr Run-Around, who owned the fair, laughed to see it.

"Yes—you stick it where you like!" he said. "I'll have a

good few throws at it, you may be sure. Mister Meanie always charges me ten times as much as he should for using this bit of common for my fair—and really he shouldn't charge anything at all."

Well, Meanie's picture and top-hat were soon stuck up at one side of the fair. When the fair opened, all the little folk of the village came to it. There were roundabouts and swings, coconut shies and all kinds of fun.

It wasn't long before everyone found Mister Meanie's picture and top-hat.

"Penny a throw!" cried Light-foot. "Have a wooden ball and throw it hard! Knock off his hat! Come on, a penny a throw!"

"Perhaps I shan't hate old Meanie so much if I knock off his hat," said Dame Tiptoe, and she bought six pennyworth of balls from Light-foot.

Crack! The very first one hit the picture on the nose. How the crowd laughed.

The second ball missed, and so did the third. The fourth ball hit the hat and made a dent in it.

"It's his own hat!" yelled Light-foot. "Hit it again, Dame Tiptoe."

Dame Tiptoe missed with her fifth ball, but the sixth one sent the hat right off into the grass. How the crowd clapped and cheered!

"Now, who's next?" said Light-foot. "Who hates old Meanie? Put your hate into a wooden ball and get rid of it. Don't keep it inside you. You'll feel better when it's outside and gone! Put your hate into a ball and throw it hard!"

It was surprising how many people disliked, hated or feared the mean old man. Quite a long line of them came to buy the balls and throw them. Time after time the picture was hit with a smack, and soon Mister Meanie's nose, eyes and mouth began to disappear as the balls wore the paint away.

The top-hat was sent to the ground many times. It was soon full of dents and holes. The money poured into the bag that Silver-wings held, and her eyes grew bright and happy. Now she would be able to pay her rent easily!

The crowd enjoyed itself thoroughly. But soon there came a warning cry.

"Here comes old Meanie himself!"

Light-foot hadn't time to take away the picture and the top-hat. Mister Meanie came striding up to look at it. But the picture was now so smudged and blurred that he could not see it was himself.

"What's this?" he said.

"It's—it's the picture of a nasty old man," said Light-foot. "I am selling balls to throw at it."

"A very mean old man," said Dame Tiptoe, who was nearby. "We've all had a throw at him! We don't like him a bit."

"Really? Well—I'll have some balls," said Mister Meanie. "I'll throw a few at him and knock his top-hat off!"

So, to Light-foot's great delight, old Meanie himself threw the wooden balls at his own picture and hat. He was a very good shot, too. He hit his own picture several times and sent his top-hat spinning to the ground. The crowd clapped heartily, and Mister Meanie felt clever. He bought some more balls. He enjoyed showing how well he could throw.

"Oh, he's paying for his own rent now!" giggled Silver-wings, as she threw Meanie's money into the bag. "Oh dear, what would he say if he knew he was throwing balls at himself?"

At the end of the day there was a great deal of money in the bag. Light-foot counted it up.

"Here's the money for your rent," he said to Silver-wings. "And here's some to buy a new top-hat for Meanie. I'll have to do that because I took his and it's all spoilt. And look at all this

money left over. What about giving a grand party to all the children in the village, Silver-wings?"

"Of course!" said the pixie, pleased. "The best party that ever was!"

Light-foot bought a new top-hat and he took it to Meanie. Meanie looked at in surprise.

"I found your old one and used it," said Light-foot. "So I have bought you another."

"How did you use it?" said Meanie, in astonishment. "It would be far too big for you."

"Well—you saw how I used it," said Light-foot, grinning suddenly. "Up at the fair. There was the picture of a mean old man—don't you remember?—who wore a top-hat, and everyone threw wooden balls at him."

Mister Meanie stared at Light-foot, and went a very bright red. "Was the picture me?" he asked, in a very small voice.

Light-foot nodded. "Yes. What a lot of enemies you must have, Mister Meanie, to make so many people pay money to throw something at your top-hat! Well—that money will pay Silver-wing's rent for her—and it paid for a new top-hat—and it is going to pay for a fine party for the village children! So, for once in a way, you have done something good—though you didn't know it! Good-bye!"

Light-foot went—and left a very much ashamed and unhappy Mister Meanie. It is a dreadful thing to be hated, a dreadful thing to have so many enemies. It made Mister Meanie think very hard indeed.

And do you know what he is going to do? He is going to that children's party—with a balloon, a bag of sweets and a present for every child! Well, it's never too late to mend, is it?

The Determined Dustbin

There was once quite an ordinary dustbin that stood in Mrs Snoodle's backyard. It was big and round and had two handles and a nice big lid that fitted exactly on its top.

This dustbin had big ideas. It wanted to see the world. It didn't want to stay in Mrs Snoodle's backyard all its life.

"After all, what can I see here?" said the dustbin to itself twenty times a day. "Nothing at all except the back door, the cat, the dog, the fence, and a few flowers—and Mrs Snoodle when she comes out to feed me."

You may think it queer that a dustbin should be fed, but, you see, when Mrs Snoodle took off its lid and emptied potato peel, cabbage stalks, cinders, and other rubbish into the dustbin, the dustbin really thought it was being fed. It was always very much annoyed when the dustman came on Thursdays and took away everything it had inside it.

But no matter how much the dustbin wanted to see the world, it couldn't, because it had no legs and couldn't move an inch. So it just had to stand in the yard and watch the cat washing itself and the dog scratching itself. It was very tired of that. Once the cat tried to get the dustbin lid off to get at some kipper-heads inside, and the dustbin was very angry. It made its lid fall down with such a clatter that the cat was frightened and sprang right over the fence into the next-door garden.

And then one day a simply wonderful thing happened to the dustbin. Mrs Snoodle took off the lid and crammed into the dustbin a pair of old shoes. And in the shoes was a get-about spell!

Now Mrs Snoodle was half a brownie, because her mother had been one of the fairy folk. When her feet had got old and tired she had made a get-about spell to put inside her shoes to help her to get about. The spell had been very helpful indeed and Mrs Snoodle had run about the house as easily as a kitten.

But now her shoes were old and she didn't want to wear them any more. So into the dustbin they went—and Mrs Snoodle forgot all about the get-about spell in the toes!

The spell fell out and wriggled down to the bottom of the dustbin. And there, of course, it began to do its work!

The dustbin found that it could move by itself. How marvellous! It hadn't any legs so it could only move by little

hops and jumps. But it soon got along all right.

"I'll go down the passage and up to the front gate," thought the dustbin joyfully. "I shall go across the road and look in at the toy-shop. I shall like that."

So hoppity-skip it went over the yard and up the passage. It was soon at the front gate, and there it stood enjoying itself for a minute or two.

It could see such a lovely lot from there! A bus went by and two cars. Three children raced along shouting. Two dogs chased one another, and a man came by with a barrow. My goodness, the dustbin was seeing the world that afternoon!

It thought it would cross the road to look into the toy-shop. So it hoppity-skipped to the kerb—but just as it hopped off the kerb into the road a lorry came by and almost ran over it. The dustbin hopped back again very quickly, and trembled so much that all the cinders inside it shook and rattled.

"Well, I really thought that dustbin was hopping along by itself!" said the lorry-driver in surprise, and he looked back to see what was happening. But the dustbin was now standing by the front gate, not daring to move into the road again.

In a little while Mrs Snoodle came out with some dead flowers to put into the dustbin. But the dustbin was not in the backyard. Mrs Snoodle was most surprised. She looked all round the little yard, but no, she couldn't see a single sign of the dustbin. It was most peculiar.

"Have you seen my dustbin?" she asked the cat. "Where in the world is it? Nobody would steal a dustbin, surely, and no dustbin walks away by itself!"

"Yours does," said the cat, with a mew. "It walked to your front gate and there it is now!"

Mrs Snoodle understood cat-language because she was half a brownie. She stared at the cat in astonishment. "Well, I've never known you tell me a story before!" she said. "Really, Tibbles, I'm surprised at you."

"Well, go and look by the front gate," said the cat. So Mrs Snoodle went to look. And there, sure enough, was the dustbin, watching a man selling carrots off a barrow, and really enjoying itself.

"Now how did you get there?" said Mrs Snoodle, hardly believing her eyes. "I suppose one of those bad boys in the next street put you there just to tease me. Well, back you come!"

And back to the yard she dragged the dustbin. It was very angry. It tried its best to hop away, but Mrs Snoodle was strong. Soon it was standing in its old place in the backyard. Mrs Snoodle put the dead flowers inside it and went indoors.

In just about two minutes the dustbin had hoppity-skipped to the front gate again, and this time it went a little way down the road, much to the surprise of two children passing by.

"Did you see that dustbin move?" said one child to another. "Ooh, it's queer. Let's go home!"

The dustbin settled itself down and watched the cars go by. It was having a perfectly marvellous time. It stayed there for a

whole hour till a policeman came by and saw it. He was astonished to see a dustbin out on the pavement all by itself, and he went to knock at Mrs Snoodle's door to tell her she must take it in. She stared at him in amazement.

"What! That dustbin out in the front again!" she cried. "I can't understand it! I'll take it in at once." So out she went again and dragged it in. "I can't think how you get out there!" she said. "Now just you stay where you are put."

The dustbin was cross. It stayed in the backyard till it was dark. "Now Mrs Snoodle can't see me," it thought. "I'll hop to the front gate again."

So away it hopped up the passage and out of the gate. But it was so dark that it really couldn't see anything interesting. So it thought it would do a little hopping down the road and enjoy a walk.

Off it went, hoppity-skipping. It bumped into old Mr Spink, who was very angry indeed. He thought the dustbin was a fat round person, and he spoke sternly to it.

"I don't know who you are, madam or sir, but let me tell you this—if you don't look where you are going you will get into trouble."

He went on his way and the dustbin hopped along again. The newspaper man came along and walked straight into it. The dustbin stopped at once. The newspaper man put out his hand and felt all round the dustbin.

"How queer!" he said. "It feels like a dustbin—and yet it walked into me. Goodness gracious! Am I dreaming? Surely walking dustbins only come in dreams?"

The newspaper man felt the dustbin again and the dustbin gave a little hop and a giggle. That was too much for the newspaper man. He gave a squeal and raced down the street as fast as he could go! He told his wife all about the walking dustbin and she didn't believe a word of it. He was very offended.

The next person who came along was the policeman again. When he walked—bang—! into the dustbin, he was most astonished. He flashed his torch onto the dustbin and stared in amazement.

"You again!" he said. "Well, I must say you are a most determined dustbin! I can't believe that you walk down the road by yourself, and yet, if not, how did you get here? Well, anyway back you go!"

And back the dustbin went, carried on the policeman's broad back. It was in a great rage, but it didn't like to do anything.

Bump! The policeman stood the dustbin down in Mrs Snoodle's backyard and then went to tell her that he had found it out in the street again.

"Bless us all!" cried Mrs Snoodle in the greatest surprise. "I simply don't understand it! Dustbins can't walk, can they? I will tell you what I will do, policeman. I will put a rope round the dustbin and tie it to the fence so that it can't possibly

Out she went and did this—and how she scolded the poor dustbin as she tied it up! It was sad and sorry, and rattled its lid very miserably when Mrs Snoodle went indoors.

Now that night a bad robber stole into Mrs Snoodle's backyard to steal the onions out of her shed. The dustbin heard him coming and tried its hardest to get to him. But it was tied up with the rope and could hardly move a step.

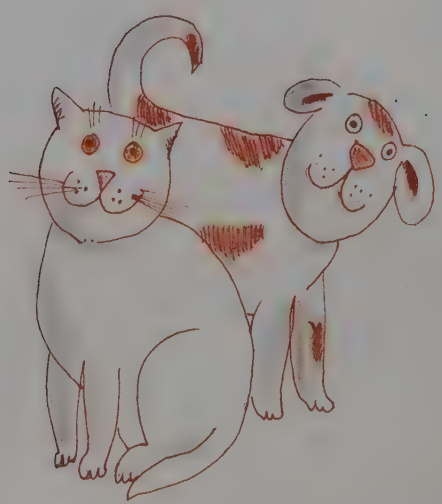
It pulled and tugged at the rope—and the rope broke with a SNAP! The dustbin fell over. Its lid flew off and struck down the robber—and he fell just at the same moment as the dustbin did! The dustbin fell on top of him—and there was the robber, nicely caught inside the big dustbin, shouting in fright because he thought that a big dog had got him!

Out came Mrs Snoodle and up ran the policeman, who wasn't very far away. So the robber was nicely caught, and the dustbin was stood upright again.

"Well, I never did!" said Mrs Snoodle in great surprise, when she saw how the dustbin had broken its rope and fallen neatly over the robber to catch him. "You are a most determined and surprising dustbin. I shall paint you red and yellow and tell everyone how marvellous you are! But please, please don't walk away any more!"

Mrs Snoodle kept her word. She painted the dustbin red and yellow, and it does look so grand. It feels grand too, because the cat and the dog have told all the other cats and dogs about how it caught the robber, and so the dustbin has visitors all day long.

It never hoppity-skips away now—and do you know why? It is because the get-about spell fell out when the dustbin tumbled over! Goodness knows where it went. Wouldn't I like to know!



The Motorcar Twins

There were once twins called Ben and Bob, but they called each other Honk and Chug, which is really very puzzling till you know why.

They loved motor cars more than anything else, and their finest game was pretending to be two cars, one called Honk and one called Chug.

Honk had a horn that kept shouting "honk-honk, poop-poop, honk-honk," whenever he pretended to be a car. And Chug made a chugging noise, like a car engine going slowly. When the twins rushed up and down the garden, pretending to be cars, you could hear Honk shouting "Honk-honk" all the time, and Chug shouting "Chug-chug-chug!"

"There go Ben and Bob again, pretending to be motor cars," their mother would say. "Really, anyone would think they would be quite tired of honking and chugging all day long."

But they didn't honk and chug *quite* all day long. Sometimes Honk had a break-down, and Chug had to tow him to a garage. And sometimes Chug had a puncture, and then Honk turned into a garage man and mended his tyre, which was always one of his legs, of course.

Often there were accidents, when the two cars crashed into one another, and then Honk and Chug would fall over and roll about.

"Two of my wheels off and my back wings bent!" Honk would shout. "Honk-honk!"

"My windscreen broken and my bonnet smashed in!" Chug would say. "Chug-chug! How careless your driver is, Honk!"

"No. It was *your* driver who caused the accident," Honk would cry. "He went too fast. One of these days a policeman will get him and then you won't be driven about any more."

Well, of course, it was all pretending, but Ben and Bob loved it just as much as *you* love pretending. They liked cars so much that they just *had* to play that they were cars. They also had a whole fleet of tiny cars indoors to play with, and two big clockwork cars as well, and so many books about cars that they filled a whole bookcase.

Their father had a fine car, a black one with a nice long bonnet, and a shining, polished body. The twins loved to sit in it and pretend to drive it. They liked nothing better than to crowd into the seat behind the driver and go motoring with their father.

"Faster, faster!" they would shout. "Go faster."

"I mustn't," their father would say. "Don't you see that we are in a town and mustn't go at more than thirty miles an hour? And look, here are traffic lights showing red. I must slow down."

"Oh, bother! Don't slow down! Go fast, fast, faster!" shouted the twins. But they never could make their father go faster than he ought to.

"I wish I was a car! I'd go faster than this!" Ben would say. "Honk-honk! Get out of the way, you silly dog in the road."

"I wish I was a car, too," said Bob. "I'd go like the wind. Chug-chug!"

Now one day a very peculiar thing happened. I don't know why it should happen on that particular day, but it may have been because both boys wished a wish at the very moment that the wind changed. I expect you have heard the old saying that if you are making an ugly face when the wind changes, your face will stay like that—well, it may be that if you wish a wish just then, there's enough magic about at that moment to make it come true.

This is what happened. Bob and Ben were racing down the garden as usual, pretending to be cars. "Honk-honk!" yelled Ben. "Chug-chug!" yelled Bob.

"I wish I was a real car!" yelled Ben.

"So do I!" yelled back Bob.

And then—and then—why, what was this? Honk felt queer all of a sudden. So did Chug. His feet no longer ran—they rolled along! His eyes didn't seem to be in his head, but seemed to be somewhere down in front of him—yes, head-lamps!

"Honk-honk! I've turned into a car!" honked Ben.

"Chug-chug! So have I!" chugged Bob.

"Come on—let's get out of the garden onto the road!"

So out of the big garden gate they went and into the road. "Keep on the left, Chug!" honked Honk. "I'll go first, now, and you can have your turn later. Honk!"

Down the road they went, feeling strange at first to have wheels that rolled round and round instead of legs that ran and jumped. They could see through their head-lamps, and they hooted loudly at anyone in their way. People jumped in fright when the two cars came hooting along at top speed.

"Traffic lights ahead!" honked Honk, who was still in front.

"Slow down. Careful now—you almost bumped into me."

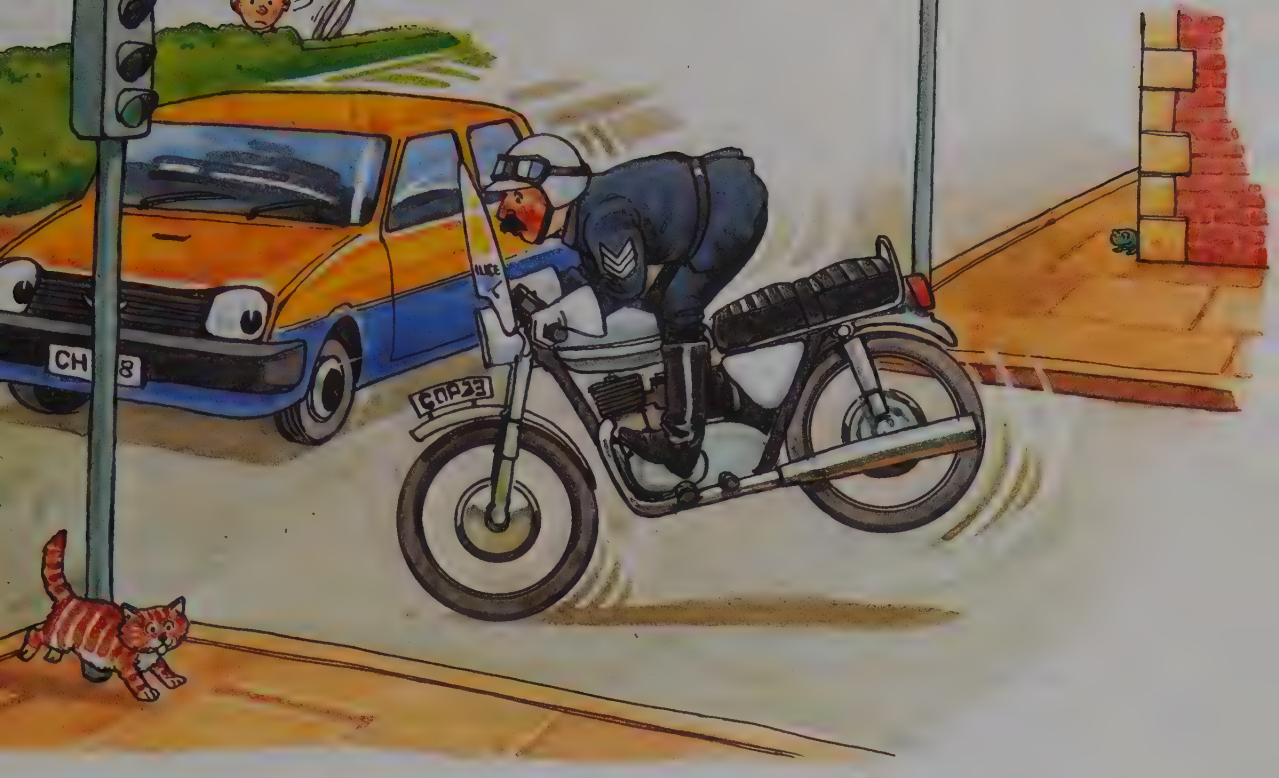
"Well, what's your back bumper for?" chugged Chug, sounding out of breath. "I say—isn't this wonderful? I don't want to change back into a boy again. It's much more fun being cars."

"I hope we have plenty of petrol," said Honk. "Look—the lights have changed from red to green—let's go!"

Well, what a time they had! They went rushing down lanes, scaring the cows as they passed. They raced along wide roads, making everyone stare. Then Chug took his turn at going in front, but he was rather wild, and he went much too fast. He couldn't slow down at some traffic lights, and he went right across them, nearly colliding with another car. Chug followed, and almost knocked a policeman off a motor-cycle.

He yelled at them, "Hey, you! What do you think you are doing, crossing the traffic lights like that? I've got your numbers! Stop at once!"

But Honk and Chug were too frightened to stop! They raced



on, one behind the other. Oh, dear—if only they could shake that policeman off! How silly and wrong of them to go across the lights when they were against them!

The policeman was amazed to see the two cars streaking off. He had taken their numbers, but he wanted a word with the drivers. He thought perhaps the cars might have been stolen. He felt puzzled. Now he came to think of it, he hadn't *seen* any drivers in the cars! But there must have been a driver in each, sitting very low down so that he couldn't spot them. All cars had to have a driver!

He tore after them on his motor-cycle. He passed a police-car and yelled to it. "Follow those cars at once!" So the police-car joined in the chase, too.

Honk and Chug knew they were being followed, for they could hear the angry hooting of the policeman on the motor-cycle, and of the police-car, too.

"Quick, Chug, quick! We *must* get away," honked Ben. "We might go to prison, even though we are cars. Quick!"

Fifty miles an hour, sixty miles, seventy miles! Oh, be careful, Honk and Chug, you'll have an accident.

Then Chug gave an excited hoot. "Hi, Honk! Isn't that Daddy's car in front? Keep up with him and perhaps he can help us. Hoot loudly."

So both cars hooted as loudly as they could. "HONK-HONK-HOOT-HOOT-HONK!"

Their father glanced round. Good gracious! Why were these cars chasing him? And behind he could see a policeman on a motor-cycle, and a police-car. He was amazed. What was happening?

He raced on ahead, trying to keep out of the way of the two cars just behind, who were still hooting madly. "They'll cause an accident soon," he thought. "Well, I'm nearly home. I'll turn into my own road in a minute, and let them all go shooting on."

So he turned into his own road—but none of the cars went shooting on. They all turned, too! The twins' father raced up to his house and swung into his drive.

Honk and Chug raced in, too—but oh, dear, they collided with each other. CRASH! BANG! SMASH!

There was a tremendous noise, and the cars shot up into the air. But they didn't come down! Instead, two small boys found themselves rolling over and over in the flower beds at the side of the drive, panting and scared. They weren't cars any longer. They were Ben and Bob again.

Their father leapt out and looked at them. "Whatever are you doing here?" he said. "I might have run you over. And did you see the two cars racing behind me? They must have had a dreadful accident. I heard a loud, crashing noise."

But there were no two cars to be seen, of course. Instead there was the policeman on the motor-cycle, and a police-car following.

"Didn't those two cars behind you turn in here?" called the

policeman with the motor-cycle. "Didn't they crash?"

"I thought they did," said the twins' father, puzzled. "But there's not a sign of them. Very strange indeed."

"Well, I've taken their numbers," said the policeman, and he showed his notebook to the police in the car behind him. "Very curious numbers they are, too. One is HONK 8, and the other is CHUG 8. False number-plates, of course!"

Honk and Chug went very red when they heard what the numbers and letters were in the policeman's notebook. "They're our nicknames and our ages," whispered Ben to Bob. "We're both eight! Let's run indoors quickly."

So they tore up the drive—but, will you believe it, they pretended to be cars even then. "Honk-honk, chug-chug, honk-honk!"

Their mother leaned out of the window. "Oh, there you are—still pretending as usual. One of these days, Ben and Bob, you'll find you've changed into cars—and *then* what will you do?"

Well, the twins could have told her, couldn't they? They knew quite well what happens to boys who turn into cars! What an adventure! I'm not sure if I would have liked it, though. Would you?

Ooooop!

"Every time we go out and leave our cottage empty we come back and find somebody has been in and taken something!" said Pop-Off, the pixie, crossly.

"And yet nobody ever sees the thief come and go," said his friend Tuppy. "We've asked old Mother Sit-About next door to keep watch for us and see who comes—but she says she has never seen anyone at all."

"This time he has taken some of our sweets again," said Pop-Off, looking in the sweet-tin. "It's too bad! Look, those lovely humbugs are gone, and we only put them in yesterday!"

"Last time it was jam tarts that were taken," said Tuppy, gloomily. "And the time before that our currant buns went. The thief must have a very sweet tooth."

They went to ask old Mother Sit-About if she had seen anyone creeping into their house that morning. They took her some roses out of their garden, because they liked the old lady very much. She was pleased.

"You're a nice pair," she said. "No, I haven't seen anyone at all going into your house. I've sat here at my window all the morning—and I put Cinders, my big black cat, to watch the back door for you. And *he* didn't see anyone, either. Did you, Cinders?"

"No-eeow," said Cinders, and rubbed his head against Tuppy's ankles.

"Well, I just can't understand it," said Tuppy. "How can anyone get in and steal our things when someone is watching our doors all the time?"

"I think I know," said old Mother Sit-About. "It's someone who can make himself invisible. He can slip in and out without being noticed at all. He can't be seen!"

"Well, there's just nothing we can do about it, then," said Pop-Off. "He may get into the house anywhere—down the chimney, in at the windows, or any place he likes!"

"We *could* do something about it," said old Mother Sit-About. "I've got a funny old spell somewhere. Look in the cupboard over there, Pop-Off, and see if you can find a little yellow bottle with a purple cork."

Pop-Off soon found the yellow bottle. It was a peculiar shape, and its cork was big, and bright purple. What spell could it be?

"I haven't used this spell for a hundred years," said Mother Sit-About, taking out the cork and sniffing the contents of the bottle. "Yes—it still smells good. Now listen to me—make something very nice and sweet that you feel certain the thief will like to eat—and then pour a few drops of this over the top of it."

"We'll make some toffee, and leave it out on the table to cool!" said Tuppy. "I'm sure the thief will like toffee; it's so very sweet."

"Good," said Mother Sit-About, and gave them the bottle. "This spell will find your thief for you in no time."

"How?" asked Tuppy.

"It's a hiccup-spell," said the old woman. "Anyone tasting it gets the hiccups. It's been very useful at times when I've wanted to find out where somebody is. All you have to do is to make your toffee, leave it out to cool, go out, slam the door, and then, instead of coming back at your usual time, come back much sooner. The thief won't mind because he's invisible and can't be seen. He can hide anywhere—but his hiccups will soon give him away!"

"That sounds marvellous," said Pop-Off, pleased. "Very marvellous. Fancy catching a thief through hiccups. Good! Thank you very much, Mother Sit-About. How much is the spell?"

"Nothing," said Mother Sit-About. "You're a kind pair of pixies and I'm glad to do something for you. But bring me back the hiccup bottle, will you, because you'll only need a few drops and there will be plenty left. I can use it some other time."

Well, next morning Tuppy and Pop-Off made a great slab of brown toffee. They laid it on some paper to cool, and put it on the kitchen table. It did look nice. Tuppy tasted it.

"Delicious!" he said. "Now, where's the hiccup bottle,

Pop-Off?"

"Here," said Pop-Off, and took out the purple cork. He scattered a few drops over the toffee. It shot up a few queer little flames, and then looked just the same as usual. Tuppy grinned.

"Aha! You've a fine spell on you, toffee! I'm sorry for whoever eats you! They won't know they're swallowing a hiccup-spell, too!"

They went out, slammed the door and walked down the road. They felt certain that the thief was somewhere about watching them. As soon as they had turned the corner he would be getting into their house somewhere, unseen because he was invisible.

Tuppy and Pop-Off went round the corner and bought a few things at the shops. Then, long before their usual time for coming back, they went quickly round the corner again and walked up the front path to their house.

"I think I heard a scuffling noise," whispered Tuppy. "The thief is here all right. I wonder if the toffee is gone?"

They went in and shut the door. Tuppy locked it on the inside. Then he went to the door that led into the bedroom and locked that, too. He put the keys into his pocket. The window was tightly shut and fastened. Now—if the thief was somewhere in the room he wouldn't be able to escape!

The toffee had gone! So had the paper it had been lying on. The pixies guessed that the thief had bitten off a big piece to suck, and had then wrapped up the rest in the paper. It was probably safely in his pocket!

"I think I'll have a cup of cocoa," said Tuppy. "I'll put the kettle on." Then he looked at the table and pretended to be surprised. "Hallo! Our toffee's gone! My word if I ever catch that thief I'll give him such a spanking he won't be able to sit down for a month."

The cocoa was soon made, and biscuits were set on a plate.

The pixies took up newspapers and began to read quietly. They winked at one another, waiting.

"Oooooop!"

The sudden noise made them both jump. My goodness, what a wonderful hiccup! Where did it come from?

"Did you hear a noise just then?" Tuppy asked Pop-Off, sounding surprised.

"Yes, I did," said Pop-Off. "Was it a hen clucking, do you think?"

"Oooooop!"

"There it is again," said Pop-Off. "What a very extraordinary noise, to be sure. Where *did* it come from?"

"From that corner over there, I think," said Tuppy. "What kind of animal says 'Oooop', Pop-Off?"

"I can't think," said Pop-Off. "I can't see any animal either. Very peculiar."

"Ooooop!"

The noise came from another corner that time. The thief had not liked his particular corner being guessed, and he had gone to another. But his hiccup gave him away. He was doing his best to stop it, the pixies felt certain! The next "Oooop" was very muffled, as if the thief had put his hand over his mouth.

But that made the next hiccup very loud indeed. "OOOOOOP!"

"Now I can't stand any more of this," said Pop-Off, standing up and looking fierce. "I shall catch that ooooping creature, pop it into the saucepan on the stove and cook it for our dinner."

There was a little noise like a sudden squeal of fright. The pixies winked at one another. Aha! The thief was getting scared now. Then they heard the handle of the door being rattled. The thief was trying to get out! But both doors were locked, so he wouldn't be able to!

"Oooooooop! Ooooooooop!"

"This is most annoying," said Tuppy, in an angry voice. "We can't get a minute's peace without something ooooping at us. Pop-Off, let us catch whatever it is. If it isn't good to eat, we will throw it on the bonfire."

There was another little squeal! Aha! The thief was *very* frightened. Good!

"Oooooop!"

"He's over there!" cried Tuppy. "Catch him!" The two pixies rushed at the corner near the door, but whoever was hiding there had slipped away. It was easy for him, because he couldn't be seen. But his next hiccup gave him away, of course.

"Over there!" cried Tuppy, and they both rushed to the book-case. But the thief slipped away easily again. Round and round went the pixies after him, but it was no good, they couldn't catch him. They could hear him clearly, though, because he hiccuped all the time.

"This is no good," said Tuppy, at last. "I am going to whistle for that big dog over the road. He will soon catch this oooping creature for us. He won't need to see him, he will smell him out. He has enormous teeth—he will soon eat up this peculiar creature hiding in our room!"

There was another squeal, and then a voice called out: "No, no! Don't call the dog! Please don't! I'll let you catch me, but don't whistle for the dog!"

And the next moment Tuppy and Pop-Off felt their hands on something plump and soft. Tuppy took it and shook it, shouting out some magic words.

"Ooona-maree,
Now let us see
Who you may be,
Ooona-maree!"

And hey presto, the thief they held became visible at once, and they could see him. They looked at him in disgust.

"So it's you, Snoopy, you nasty, fat little lump," said Pop-Off. "I might have guessed it. Always pretending to be so good and kind and trustworthy—but really a nasty, deceitful little thief!"

"I suppose you found an Invisible Spell and thought it was a wonderful thing to use because you could go about and steal more things to eat," said Tuppy, shaking him hard. "You nasty little Snoopy! Now let me see, Pop-Off, what did we say we'd do to the thief?"

"Pop him in the saucepan and cook him for our dinner," said Pop-Off, grinning. Snoopy gave a loud yell and dropped on to his knees.

"Oooop! Ooooop! No, don't do that! Oooop! Oh dear, these dreadful hiccups! Oooop! Let me go and I'll never steal again!"

"Now listen," said Pop-Off, sternly. "I don't think we'll have you for our dinner, because a nasty creature like you would probably make us sick. But we're going to pin a notice on your back with a magic pin, so that you can't take it off. We shan't tell you what we'll write on it, but you'll just have to put up with it. If you don't like it, you can come and ask us to take it off, and we'll give you a spanking instead. We shan't mind a bit."

Snoopy was thankful to hear that he was not to be spanked, *or* cooked. He stood there while Pop-Off wrote something on a large sheet of paper, and then pinned it on his back.

"Oooooop!" hiccuped Snoopy, suddenly. "Oh, dear, why do I keep doing that?"

"There you are. You can go," said Tuppy, giving him a slap. "By the way—where's our toffee?"

"Here," said Snoopy, pulling half of it out of his pocket.

"You can keep it," said Tuppy, with a grin. "Eat it all up.

We don't want it now!"

Greedy Snoopy was surprised and pleased. He at once bit off another piece of toffee. His hiccups came more quickly than ever then, of course!

Out he went with the notice on his back. Everyone saw it and ran up, most interested to read it. This is what it said:

"I am Snoopy the thief. Every time I hiccup it is because I have stolen something. Please give me a smack whenever I hiccup, to teach me not to steal again."

Well, of course, everyone was *most* delighted to do that, because nobody liked or trusted Snoopy. The pixie children followed him all day long, waiting for a hiccup to come, and took it in turn to give him a smack for each hiccup.

Snoopy didn't guess he was eating a hiccup spell every time he took a bite at the toffee, and as it lasted him for five whole days, he had a very hard time indeed with hiccups and smacks. Nobody would sell him a spell to stop the hiccups, either. He was very miserable indeed.

"But he's cured at last!" said Tuppy to Pop-Off, after a week or two had gone by. "Quite cured. He's stopped hiccuping, and he's stopped being smacked—and as far as I can tell he's stopped stealing, too!"

They took the hiccup-spell back to Mother Sit-About, and she laughed till she cried when she heard what had happened. She told Tuppy to put the queer yellow bottle back into her cupboard.

"It may come in useful again some time," she said. "You never know!"

Oooooooop!

He wanted adventures

There was once a boy called Paul who wanted adventures. "If I could have just *one* adventure it would be something!" he thought. "It's so dull at home—just my bicycle to ride, and my electric train to play with, and a shelf full of books."

Well, those weren't dull things at all, of course, but Paul thought they were. "I want to have something really *exciting*," he said. "Something that will make my heart beat fast. An adventure!"

And then one day he fell straight into one. He was going down the road when he met the milkman's little horse, running away at top speed! The milkman ran after it, shouting. Bottles leapt off the cart and smashed in the road, and what with the sound of galloping hooves and smashing bottles Paul suddenly felt very excited indeed!

The horse galloped straight at him. It had been bitten by a big fly and was terrified. Paul took one look and bolted for the hedge.

He squeezed through in a panic, and the horse galloped off down the road. Paul rolled into the field on the other side of the hedge.

He stood up, his heart beating fast. What a narrow escape! The horse might have knocked him over! And then, dear me, he heard a bellow nearby! He turned and saw a big horned animal running at him, and at the same moment he saw a big notice. "Beware of the Bull!"

Without waiting another moment Paul fled across the field. Quick! Quick! He must get over the stile before he was tossed by sharp horns!

He fell over the stile, gasping, and rolled right up to two people who were crouching over a fire.

"Here! What are you doing?" said one, angrily. "You've knocked our pail of water over."

So he had. "You go and get us some more out of the stream," said a big boy, much taller than Paul. "Go on —hurry! Coming over the stile like that, right on top of us!"

"The bull was chasing me," said Paul.

"Fibber!" said the other boy.

"I shan't get you any water if you call me that," said Paul, annoyed.

"Oh, yes, you will," said the big boy, and he caught hold of Paul. He put the pail upside down on Paul's head and then he and the other boy marched him to the stream.

"Now then—fill the pail with water!" said the big boy. But Paul wouldn't.

Splash! He found himself in the stream! The other boy had given him a sharp push. They both roared to see Paul scramble out the other side, wet through. He thought they were going to jump the stream and chase him, so he set off at

top speed to where the stream ran into the river.

There was a boat there. Paul leapt into it, his heart thumping madly. He pushed off and began rowing. Thank goodness he had escaped from those awful boys.

An angry voice yelled at him. "Hey, you! What are you doing, taking my boat? Bring it back at once."

Paul tried to swing the boat round, and somehow got an oar entangled in water weed. Paul leaned out to get it free—and over he went, splash into the water for the second time!

He was so afraid of the shouting man that he didn't swim the little distance to the bank he had left—he tried to swim right across the wide river. He couldn't, of course, and soon he was yelling for help.

"Help! I shall drown! Help!"

A river steamer came up, heard his cries, and stopped nearby. A boat-hook was put out and the hook caught his clothes. He was pulled near the steamer and hauled aboard. Soon he was telling everyone what had happened—from the moment he had met the runaway horse to his rescue from the river.

"My!" said a boy, enviously, "what a fine lot of adventures you've had! I wish I'd been you!"

"Adventures!" said Paul. "Were those *adventures?* I hated them. I've always wanted adventures—but not that kind!"

"Ah—they might have been fine if you'd *managed* them all right," said the boy. "You ran away from them all."

"How do you *manage* adventures?" said Paul, surprised.

"Well—the milkman's pony is very small—you could easily have caught his reins and pulled him to a standstill," said the boy. "Then everyone would have cheered you and said how brave you were. But you ran away. Then, you know, there *isn't* a bull in that field, although there's a notice there. I know, because it belongs to my father, who's a farmer."

"There *was* a bull. I saw its horns," said Paul.

"That was Buttercup, our old cow," said the boy. "She's quite harmless. I expect she wondered why you scrambled through the hedge like that. If you'd said 'Shoo!' to her, she would have scampered off with her tail in the air, and you'd have thought you'd scared a bull, and felt very brave."

"But I ran away instead," said Paul, mournfully, "and bumped into a picnic party of two boys and upset their pail."

"Yes. Those two boys are camping there. They are the Prince of Bigtonia and his cousin," said the boy. "I expect they would have asked you to share their meal and made friends with you if you hadn't been so silly. Why couldn't you have said you were sorry and gone to get them water at once? They'd have made friends with you then."

"But I struggled and they threw me in the stream," said Paul. "I didn't know who they were. I've heard of the prince—he's a wonderful cricketer, isn't he? I'd love to meet him."

"Well, you did—and you ran away from that adventure, too," said the boy. "And you took a boat—it was my uncle's, you know, I recognized him yelling on the bank. He'd have let you use his boat any day, and you and I could have gone rowing together."

"But I upset the boat, and got dragged aboard this steamer," said poor Paul. "And everyone is laughing at me."

"Well—run away again!" said the boy. "Jump overboard! I tell you, you don't know how to manage adventures! You can get a lot out of them if you face up to them and manage them in the right way. My word, I'd love adventures. You're a duffer. You've had plenty today, and all you can say is that you hated them. Pooh—what a baby you are!"

Well, Paul jumped off the steamer at the next stop and went home in soaking wet clothes. He was afraid that his next adventure would be a spanking from his father for coming home with torn and dripping clothes! The boat-hook had

made a great hole in his shorts.

"Adventures! Perhaps I *might* have liked them if I hadn't run away all the time," said Paul. "I'll *manage* them next time, like that boy said. But, oh dear—if Dad is my next adventure, I don't know *how* I'm going to manage him!"

I don't either—it's not the kind of adventure anyone likes, is it?

Funny One's Present

"It's Mother Kindly's birthday at the end of October," said Pippity. "We all ought to give her a present. She's so kind."

"Yes, we ought," said Jinks. "I shall buy her a very grand present."

"I shall sew her a cushion for her back as she gets tired now," said Winky.

Mother Kindly didn't know what all her friends were planning for her. She was a little old woman who had been kind to everyone in the village. But she hadn't had a very happy life. Once her cottage had been burnt down and she had lost everything. Another time all her hens had died of a strange illness and her cat had been caught in a trap.

"She's never had a year full of happiness," said Funny One, thinking hard. "Even last year the cows got into her garden and ate all the vegetables. I wish I could give her some good luck as a present."

But Funny One had no money to buy anything.

It was Silver-Tip who gave him an idea. "Do you know," he said, "that every falling leaf you catch while it's still in the air means a happy day for you next year?"

"Does it really?" said Funny One, thinking very hard.

It was autumn and as Funny One was absentmindedly trying to catch his first leaf, he had his great idea!

"If I caught three hundred and sixty five leaves and gave them all to Mother Kindly, she would have a whole year full of happiness."

No sooner had he thought of this than Funny One started to catch a leaf for every day of the year so that Mother Kindly could be happy.

His friends laughed at him as they saw him dancing and capering in the woods, trying to catch leaves.

At last the day before Mother Kindly's birthday came and poor Funny One had to spend all that night working in the woods as he still needed twenty four more leaves to make three hundred and sixty five.

Next morning all the villagers went along to Mother Kindly's house with their birthday presents.

"A happy birthday to you! Here's a cushion I have made!"

"Many happy returns of the day! Here's a dozen new-laid eggs."

"Lots of happy birthdays to you! Here's a red shawl I've knitted all myself."

"Happy birthday to you, Mother Kindly! Here's my present for you!" panted Funny One coming in with a big sack. Everyone stared.

"What's in the sack, Funny One?" asked Winky.

"A whole happy year!" said Funny One. "I caught it myself for Mother Kindly."

But Winky laughed when he saw that the sack was full of nothing but dead leaves.

Mother Kindly took Funny One's hand and she kissed him. "Funny One, it's a lovely present. I know the old saying about every falling leaf that is caught bringing a happy day next year. I expect you have caught a whole three hundred and sixty five leaves!"

"Yes, I did," said Funny One. "So now you'll have a year without any bad luck."

"You're a dear little person. How kind of you to bring me a happy year. It's my very nicest present."

Funny One was delighted. He went home feeling very warm and happy.

And sure enough, Mother Kindly had a perfectly wonderful year of happiness.

The Little Girl who told Stories

Once upon a time there was a little girl called Caroline. She was a pretty little thing, with beautiful manners and a kind heart; but dear me, she told the most dreadful stories! She hardly ever kept to the truth, and her poor mother really didn't know how to cure her.

She would say that she had seen a parrot in the garden, when she had seen nothing but a little brown sparrow. She vowed that she was top girl in her class at school when really she was only fifth. She told her friends that she had twenty glorious frocks in her cupboard at home, when she had only four quite ordinary ones and one silk party frock.

So you can see what a dreadful little story-teller she was! It wasn't a bit of good Caroline being kind and pretty, because she always spoilt everything by telling untruths.

One day she wandered into Wishing Wood, which was just near her home. She found a little path she had never seen before, and she ran down it, wondering where it went. After about half an hour she came to the funniest little house she had ever seen.

It was like a small hillock, about half as high again as Caroline. Daisies grew thickly all over it, and it was a very pretty sight. In one side was a bright yellow door, with a blue knocker.

"Well!" said Caroline, stopping in surprise. "What a very peculiar little house! I wonder who lives in it?"

She very soon knew, for at that moment the yellow door flew open, and a small man came out. He looked very worried, and he beckoned to Caroline.

"Can you cut thin sandwiches?" he asked.

Caroline looked astonished. Then she nodded her head.

"Yes," she said. "I often cut them for Mummy when we're going picnicking."

"Well, *do* come in and help me cut some," begged the little man. "I seem to be making such a mess of it."

Caroline followed him into the queer house. It was perfectly round inside, and the furniture was very small. On a little table was a big loaf of bread, a dish of butter, and a jar of home-made potted meat.

"It's like this," said the dwarf. "I've been asked to a picnic today, and I promised to take some sandwiches. But I've never made any before, and so I can't seem to cut them nicely."

Caroline looked at the big pieces he had hacked off the loaf and tried to spread with butter.

"Yes, they are not very nice," she said. "Never mind, I'll do as many as you want."

She asked him for a sharp knife, and then set to work. She was neat and quick with her hands, and soon had a fine pile of thin, well-buttered sandwiches on a plate. When she had made twenty, the little man told her that was enough.

"They are beautifully made!" he said gratefully. "Thank you so much. Now I should like to give you something in return for your kindness."

"Oh, no, that's quite all right," said Caroline politely.

"It would please me very much to give you a nice present," said the little man. "Come with me, and you shall choose something for yourself."

He lifted up a trap-door in the floor, and Caroline saw a flight of steps leading downwards. The dwarf led the way and she followed. They went along a dark passage lit dimly by an old hanging lantern, and then came to a big cave. In it were sitting many other little men, all hard at work.

"What are they doing?" whispered Caroline.

"Look and see," answered the little man.

She bent over the busy dwarfs and saw that they were making all kinds of marvellous jewellery. Green precious stones, blue ones, yellow, white, and red, every colour was there, and each stone was being set into wonderful glittering necklaces, bracelets, rings, and broqches.

"Oh, how lovely!" cried Caroline, as she saw them. "I never did see anything quite so beautiful as your lovely stones, little man!"

"Well, I'm pleased to hear you say so," said the dwarf, smiling. "Now just choose anything you think you would like, and I shall be delighted to give it to you. One good turn deserves another."

"You *are* kind," said Caroline, going red with delight. "I haven't a ring, so do you think I might choose one?"

"Certainly," said the little man. "What colour?"

"Well, I have such a pretty green frock at home that I think

I'd like a green one to match," said Caroline.

At once one of the dwarfs ran over to her with a tray of bright green rings. Caroline picked one up and looked at it. It was set in silver, and the green stone was very big and bright.

"May I have this one?" she asked.

"Yes," said the dwarf. "But I must just warn you of something, Caroline, if you have that ring. Never tell an untruth whilst you are wearing it, for it can only belong to someone truthful."

"Oh, I'll be very careful," said Caroline. She slipped the ring on her finger, and then followed the dwarf along the passage back to his little house again. She thanked him very much, said good-bye, and ran home, delighted with her present. The ring shone brightly on her finger, and was so beautiful that it caught everyone's eye.

Now the next day, when Caroline went to school, all the girls and boys crowded round her to see the ring, for they soon noticed it on her finger.

"Where did you get it, where did you get it?" they cried.

Caroline told them her story—but alas! she could not keep to the truth.

"The little man wanted a hundred sandwiches," she said, "and I cut them all in five minutes. Wasn't it clever of me? No wonder he wanted to give me a ring!"

Suddenly Caroline gave a cry. The ring suddenly seemed to become much tighter, and pressed so hard round her finger that it hurt her.

"Oh, Caroline!" cried the children. "Your ring has changed colour! Look! It has gone a fiery red colour! How queer!"

So it had. It had lost its beautiful bright green hue, and was now a flaming, angry red. It was so tight that Caroline couldn't get it off, and it hurt her very much.

Suddenly one of the children pointed his finger at her.

"I know, I know!" he cried. "You've told a story and the

ring's gone red for danger! Story-teller, story-teller!"

Caroline went as red as the ring. She suddenly remembered the dwarf's warning, and she knew she had been foolish and wrong.

"I—I *did* tell a story," she said humbly. "I only made twenty sandwiches, not a hundred."

At once the ring stopped squeezing her finger, and became its proper size. It went dark for a moment, and then turned from red to its own bright green once again.

"It's green again, it's green again!" cried everyone. Caroline looked at it in astonishment. What a peculiar ring!

"I don't think I like it very much, after all," she thought. "It will be dreadful if it keeps turning red like that."

The ring remained green all that day, and then Caroline forgot again. Her mother said it must be bedtime, and sent Caroline to see if it was half-past six.

It was, but Caroline didn't want to go to bed. So the naughty little girl told her mother that it was only ten minutes past the hour. No sooner had she told that story than the ring tightened on her finger again, and made her cry out. It went fiery red, and Caroline, frightened that her mother might see it, hastily told the truth.

"No, Mummy, I made a mistake," she said. "It *is* half-past six, so I'd better go to bed."

The ring loosened, and became green once more. Caroline kissed her mother good night, and ran off.

That night in bed she had a long think. She wanted to wear the ring, for it was very beautiful, but she knew quite well that she could only do so safely if she stopped telling stories.

"Well, it *is* horrid to keep telling stories," thought the little girl. "I'd better stop, before I get too bad. And the ring will help me, for every time I feel it hurting me, I'll know I've not spoken truly, and I'll own up."

She fell asleep comforted. But although it was easy to make

up her mind to be good, it was dreadfully hard to get out of her bad habit. Caroline was horrified to find how many times she told stories. Time after time she felt the ring tighten angrily on her finger, and saw it change to a fierce red, attracting everyone's attention to it.

"Story-teller, story-teller!" cried the children when they saw the ring change colour. "Oh, you naughty little story-teller!"

Then Caroline would go red, too, and say she was sorry, and tell the truth properly. The ring would flash green again, whilst the children laughed. But little by little Caroline learnt her lesson, and soon she became quite a truthful little girl.

She still has the ring, and if ever you meet her she will show it to you, and perhaps let you wear it for a few minutes. But if you are a story-teller, don't put it on—for the ring will turn a fiery red, and so will you!

The Silly Little Cat

Tiptoe was a pretty little cat. She was black with a white front and four white paws, and she could jump and climb marvellously.

She was very vain. "I'm the prettiest cat in the road!" she told the others. "And I can jump the highest, too. See me leap right up to the top of the wall!"

And up she leapt in one bound. She certainly was very clever indeed. But nobody likes clever people if they keep talking about themselves, and the other cats turned their backs on Tiptoe whenever she came by.

But Old Tom, the slyest cat there, swished his long black tail and looked at Tiptoe. "Ah, clever you may be, Tiptoe, but there's something you can't do! I once saw a cat do it, so it can be done, but *you* couldn't do it!"

"Well, if a cat has done it, I can do it," said Tiptoe at once. "Tell me."

"Do you see that tall flag-post that goes almost up to the sky?" said old Tom. "Well, I once saw a cat go up to the top. You couldn't do *that*, Tiptoe!"

"Oh yes I could!" said Tiptoe, and she ran to the flag-post.

Tabby jumped up to stop her. "Tiptoe! Don't be silly!

You'll never get down again."

"Let her go," said Old Tom, slyly. "It will keep her out of our way for a long, long time."

Tiptoe climbed up the flag-post, up and up and up. What a long way it was to the top! She panted and puffed, but up she went, digging her claws into the wood. And at last there she was, on the very top, balancing herself on the round knob.

She was just opening her mouth to mew to the others to show how clever she was, when she saw how far she was from the ground. Could that be the ground, so far away? And were those little specks the other cats, watching her? Tiptoe was terrified.

She wobbled a bit. She dug her claws in hard. She would never, never, be able to get down. She would fall if she even looked down again.

"I've been stupid," she wailed to herself. "I wanted to show off, and now see where I've put myself! I shall have to stay here all my life."

Well, she stayed there for two hours, feeling more and more frightened. Then a boy came along and saw her. He was most upset. Poor little cat at the top of the pole! He must tell the policeman to rescue her.

The policeman couldn't, of course. But he went to the fire-station and got the firemen to bring the ladder out. Then a fireman went up, lifted Tiptoe off the flag-post, put her on his shoulder, and brought her down.

"Well—perhaps that will teach Tiptoe not to think she's so clever, and stop her boasting any more!" said Old Tom.

The next morning Tiptoe walked up to her friends proudly. "I'm the cat they told the policeman about!" she said. "I'm the cat the firemen rescued! I really am the most remarkable cat in the world!"

Well, well, what do you think of *that*? You just can't teach some people anything, can you?

The Castle without a Door

Once upon a time a wizard came to live just outside Brownie Town. He was called Kookle, and no one knew much about him.

"He's building himself a castle on the hill," they said to one another. "He just sits on a stone and says queer words, and the castle grows out of the ground. It is wonderful to watch."

"But it's a very queer castle," said Tinker, a fat, jolly brownie. "Do you know that it hasn't any doors at all? How are people going to get in and out, that's what I'd like to know. The windows are far too high up to climb into."

"That's very funny," said the brownies, and they shook their heads. "Perhaps Kookle is up to mischief of some sort."

It wasn't long before Kookle was very much disliked. He never spoke to the brownies at all, not even when they wished him good day. He turned one of them into a pillar-box one day because the little brownie had accidentally run into him round a corner, and it took Brownie Town a whole week before they could find the right magic to turn the pillar-box back into a brownie.

"He is a horrid wizard," said the little folk. "If only we could get rid of him! But what can you do with someone who lives in a castle without any doors? You can't even get in and beg him not to hurt us!"

"He'll do worse mischief yet, you mark my words!" said Tinker.

Now two weeks after that, little Princess Peronel came to stay with her old nurse, Mother Browneyes, in the little cottage at the west end of Brownie Town. She loved her old nurse, and the two of them went walking in Wishing Wood

every day. And then suddenly a dreadful thing happened.

Mother Browneyes came running back from Wishing Wood in a terrible state, crying and groaning in distress.

"What's the matter, what's the matter?" cried the brownies.

"Oh, oh!" wept Mother Browneyes. "I was in the wood this morning, when who should come up but Kookle the Wizard. And no sooner did he set eyes on pretty little Peronel than he said: 'Ha! I will have you marry me!' And oh, whatever shall we do? He caught her up then and there and carried her off to his castle!"

"Goodness gracious! What a terrible thing!" cried all the brownies in horror. "Our little princess with that horrid old wizard! Whatever can we do?"

Well, they decided to go at once to the castle and demand Peronel back. So they trooped off, scores of them, all feeling very angry but a good deal frightened too, in case Kookle

should turn them into beetles or frogs.

They arrived at the castle, and then of course they remembered it had no doors. They couldn't knock because there was no knocker, and they couldn't ring because there was no bell. They just stood there round the castle and wondered what in the world they could do.

"Hie! Hie!" suddenly shouted Tinker, the fat little brownie. "Kookle! Kookle! If you're anywhere in the castle, just listen to what we say. Give us back Peronel at once!"

Suddenly the wizard appeared at a window and looked down at the brownies. He laughed loudly.

"Ho!" he cried. "If you want Peronel, come in and get her. Ho ho ho!"

"We can't," yelled Tinker in a rage. "There are no doors!"

"Then go away!" said the wizard. "If you're not all gone by the time I count ten, I'll turn you into muffin-bells! Ha ha! Now—one, two, three . . .'

But by the time Kookle came to ten, there wasn't a single brownie to be seen. They had all fled down the hill to the town.

"We *must* do something," said they. "We can't let Peronel be captured like this. What shall we do? Shall we send for the king's army?"

"Pooh, what's the good of that?" asked Tinker. "Do you want them all turned into mice or something? No, until we know where the door of the castle is, there's not a single thing we can do."

"But there *is* no door," said another brownie.

"There must be one that we can't see," said Tinker. "The wizard comes in and out, doesn't he? Well, there simply *must* be a door, but by some kind of magic he has hidden it from our eyes. What we must do is to find out where it is, and then, even if we can't see it, we shall know where to find it and can turn the handle by feeling about for it."

"Well, couldn't we go to the castle tonight and feel all round

the walls for the door?" said the other brownies.

"Yes," said Tinker. So that night six brownies went creeping up to the castle and began to feel round the wall. But alas for them! The wizard heard them, and turned them all into kittens, so that Brownie Town was in despair to see six little kittens come running back that night, instead of six brownies.

Tinker sat down in his cottage and thought very hard. He did so want to rescue Peronel, for he thought she was the prettiest little princess in all Fairyland. But try as he would he could think of no plan.

Next morning when Brownie Town awoke and drew its curtains back, it saw that snow had fallen in the night, and all the countryside was white.

"Hurrah!" cried the youngsters. "Now we can build snowmen and play with snowballs."

Then Tinker suddenly had a wonderful idea, and he ran out of his cottage to tell the others.

"Come round and listen," he said. "I have a plan."

Everyone came close, and listened to Tinker.

"We will build a big snowman in the field just outside the castle," he said. "If the wizard sees us doing that he will take no notice. But listen! In the night, before the moon is out, I will dress myself in a white cloak, and put on the snowman's hat. You shall quickly knock down the snowman and I will take his place! Then I will stand there all night and watch to see where the door is when the wizard comes out for his nightly walk!"

"Oh, Tinker, how clever you are!" cried all the others. "That is a wonderful plan! Kookle will never guess that you are not a real snowman!"

"Six of you go and make the snowman now," said Tinker. "Make him about my size. Laugh and talk all the time, as if you were really playing and had forgotten all about Peronel."

So six of the brownies went off to the hill on which Kookle's castle stood. They laughed and talked, and looked as if they

hadn't a care in the world. The wizard peeped out of one of his windows, but when he saw them playing with the snow and building a snowman, he took no further notice.

Before night came the brownies had built a nice fat snowman just about Tinker's size. They put a row of stones down his front for buttons, and tied a muffler round his neck. They put a hat with a feather in it on his head, and stuck a pipe in his mouth. Then he was finished.

Off they went down the hill to Brownie Town. Tinker had been very busy all day long making himself a long white cloak. Mother Browneyes had helped him, and together they had sewn six big black buttons down the front. When night came, the cloak was ready.

The six brownies ran into the cottage.

"We've finished the snowman!" they cried. "It's just your size, Tinker. Hurry up before the moon shines out. We'll go back with you and help you."

So in the darkness before the moon rose the seven brownies went silently back up the hill. When they came to their snowman they quickly knocked it down, and Tinker stood in its place with his long white cloak round him.

The brownies wound the snowman's muffler round his neck and put the snowman's feathered hat on his head. They stuck the pipe in his mouth and he was ready!

"Ooh!" said the brownies. "You *do* look like a snowman, Tinker! Nobody could possibly tell that you weren't one! Well, good-bye and good luck to you! The moon is just coming up and we must go."

They ran down the snowy hill, and Tinker was left alone. He felt rather lonely and frightened. Suppose the wizard guessed he wasn't a real snowman? Ooh, that would be dreadful!

The moon came up and soon Tinker could see every brick of the castle quite clearly. There he stood on the hillside, hat on head, and pipe in mouth, standing as still as could be, his white cloak reaching down to his heels. He waited for an hour. He waited for two hours. He waited for three, and four and five. He waited until midnight, and by that time he was so cold that he was shivering.

"Oh my, I do hope the wizard won't see me shivering," thought Tinker in a fright. "But I can't help it. I can't stop shaking with the cold!"

Now just at that moment the clock down in Brownie Town struck twelve. Tinker heard it—and at the same time he heard a voice inside the castle chanting a long string of magic words. And then, before his eyes, he saw the door of the castle appearing! It was outlined in green flame, and he saw it quite

clearly. There was a knocker and a handle, and a very big letter-box.

As Tinker watched with his eyes wide open in surprise, he saw the door swing open. The wizard appeared in the opening, and stood there for one moment before stepping outside. Tinker hurriedly counted the number of bricks from the side of the castle to the door, for he knew that at any moment the door might disappear again. His heart was thumping so loudly he was afraid the wizard would hear it.

Kookle stepped outside, and at the same moment the door faded away and disappeared. The place where it had been looked just like the wall again. Then suddenly Kookle looked towards Tinker!

"Ha, a snowman!" said the wizard. "Stupid little brownies! How they do waste their time! I've a good mind to knock it all down!"

Tinker nearly died of fright. The wizard came right up to him and snatched the pipe out of his mouth. What Kookle meant to do next Tinker didn't know—but just at that very moment a witch came sailing through the air on her broom stick and called loudly to the wizard.

"Hey, Kookle! It's time to join the big meeting. Come along!"

In a trice the wizard left Tinker by himself, leapt onto the broom with the witch, and sailed off into the moonlit sky. Tinker sighed with relief, and began to tremble, for he had been very much frightened. As soon as the wizard was quite out of sight he threw off his cloak, and ran to the castle. He counted fifty-three bricks from the side of the castle, and then began to feel about for the door.

Almost at once he felt the handle and the knocker. He turned the handle and the door swung open. He stepped into the castle and shut the door.

"Peronel! Peronel!" he cried. "Where are you?"

"Here! Here!" cried a tiny voice, far away. "Oh who are you? Have you come to save me? I am right at the top of the castle!"

Tinker ran to the winding staircase, and raced up it, two steps at a time. He had to stop to get his breath after he had gone up some way, for there were many hundreds of stairs. Up he went, and up and up, hoping with all his heart that Kookle would not return until he had got the princess away in safety.

At the top of the castle was a small tower. In this Peronel was imprisoned. Her door was locked and bolted on the outside, and Tinker quickly drew the big bolts back, and turned the key, which the wizard had left in the lock.

In the tower room was the little princess, very pale and thin, for the wizard had given her only bread and water because she would not consent to marry him. She ran to Tinker and flung her arms round his neck.

"Oh, you dear, brave brownie!" she cried. "Thank you so much for saving me!"

"You're not saved yet!" said Tinker. "Quick, we must get out of the castle before the wizard comes back."

Down the hundreds of stairs they ran, and then went to the big door, which was quite easily seen from the inside of the castle. And then, oh dear, how dreadful! Tinker couldn't open

the door! No matter how he twisted the handle and pulled, that door wouldn't open! The little brownie was in despair.

For two hours he tried to get out, but at last he gave it up. The door was closed by magic and only the right magic words could open it from the inside.

"What *are* we to do?" said the princess, almost in tears. "Kookle will soon be back, and then we shall be in a worse fix than before. He will be terribly angry."

"I know what we'll do!" said Tinker at last. "It isn't a very good plan I've thought of, but it might work. I expect the wizard will see that the snowman is gone and guess that I am here. He will come rushing into the castle in a fearful rage, and race up to the tower. Well, look—I've got some string here. I'll tie it from this stool to that chair over there, and when the wizard comes in it will trip him up and perhaps we shall just have time to run out of the castle."

"Yes, that's a good plan," said Peronel. "And, Tinker, don't let's try to run all the way down the hill to Brownie Town, because the wizard is sure to catch us. Just outside you will see a rabbit hole. Well, Sandy, a very nice bunny lives there, and I know he would let us shelter in his burrow till the danger is past."

"That's splendid," said Tinker. He quickly tied the string across the hall just beyond the doorway. Then, hearing a cock crow in Brownie Town, and knowing that the wizard would soon be returning, he and Peronel crouched down in a dark corner near the door.

Suddenly they heard the sound of an angry voice outside. It was the wizard, who had discovered the snowman's cloak on the ground, and had seen that the snowman was gone.

"What's this! What's this!" he cried in a fury. "This is a trick! That snowman was a brownie, and he saw me come from the castle! Well, he can't get out, and I'll catch him, yes, I will!"

In another moment the door flew open, and the wizard rushed in. He caught his foot against the string and down he fell with a crash! The door began to close, but Peronel and Tinker slipped through in a flash, and then tore down the hill. The princess led the brownie to a rabbit hole, and the two crept down it. The bunny came to meet them, and they explained to him in a whisper that they were in danger and needed shelter.

"Come this way," said Sandy, and he led them to a little round room, where they was a tiny fire and a jugful of cocoa warming by it.

"Help yourselves to the cocoa," said Sandy. "And there are biscuits in that tin. I'm just going back to the hillside to see what is happening. Don't be afraid. You are quite safe here."

So Tinker poured out a steaming hot cup of cocoa for Peronel, and gave her some sugar-biscuits. Then he helped himself, for he was hungry and cold. They sat there, warm and happy, till Sandy the Rabbit came back.

"Ha!" said Sandy in glee. "That old wizard is in a dreadful temper. He bumped his head when he fell down, and hurt his knee. He tore down the hillside after you, but of course he didn't know you had come here. He couldn't find you, so he's gone back to his castle to bathe his head. I shouldn't be surprised to find that he leaves Brownie Town quite soon."

All that day and night the brownie and Peronel stayed with the kind rabbit. Next morning they followed Sandy down many long winding passages under-ground that led to the bottom of the hill. There they came out into the sunshine and said good-bye to the rabbit. Off they went to Brownie Town, the princess skipping for joy to be free again.

What a welcome they got! How all the brownies cheered! And how pleased old Mother Browneyes was to see the princess again!

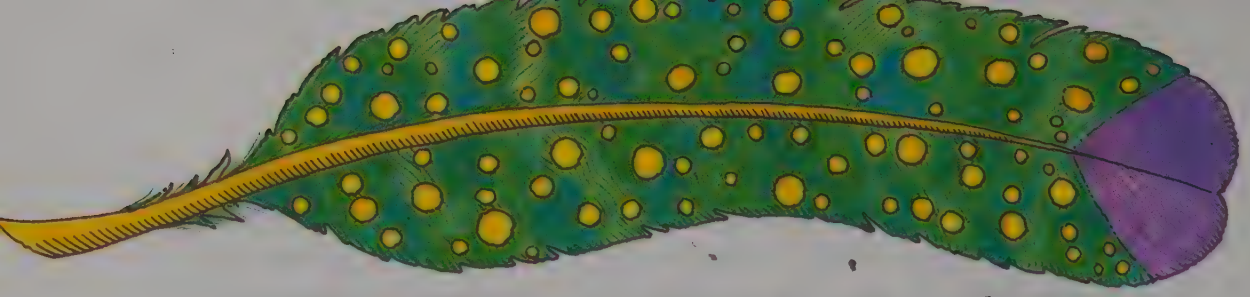
Just as they were all as happy as could be, listening to

Tinker's adventures, there came a big BANG! Everyone rushed out to see what was happening—and a very queer sight they saw!

Kookle the Wizard had made up his mind to leave Brownie Town, and had worked a spell on his castle. With a big BANG it had risen into the air and was now sailing away to the east, flapping two huge wings that had grown out of the walls.

"Ooh!" said all the brownies in surprise and joy. "That's the end of the old wizard! He'll never come again! Let's give a party this afternoon to show we're happy!"

So they did, and the princess sat next to Tinker, who was happier than he had ever been in his life before. And when Peronel presented him with a lovely gold watch for saving her, you should have heard all the brownies cheer! It was the jolliest afternoon you can imagine—and I *do* wish I'd been there, don't you?



The Tippity Bird's Feather

Nobbly the gnome had a tippity bird's feather. He was very proud of it. It was bright green, with yellow spots and a purple patch at the tip. Anyone who had such a feather was very lucky, so Nobbly kept it safe.

His Aunt Jenny had sent it to him as a birthday present. He showed it to Higgle and Rikky and Winks, who lived with him. "I don't mind lending it to you sometimes," he said, "but whoever uses it must always put it back into the tall red vase on the mantelpiece."

Higgle, Rikky and Winks promised and always put the feather back into the tall red vase.

One day, Nobbly felt that he wanted a bit of good luck, but when he went to get the feather, it wasn't there!

"Bother!" said Nobbly and shouted for Higgle, Rikky and Winks.

They came running. Nobbly pointed to the tall red vase. "Where's my tippity feather?" he shouted. "Who has it?"

Higgle, Rikky and Winks looked at one another in dismay. Who could have the feather?

"Higgle, you borrowed it on Thursday to stir the cream!" said Rikky. "Did you leave it in the cream jug?"

They all went to look but it wasn't there. Then Winks remembered, "Rikky, you wanted a pen to write with, so you took the feather out of the cream jug, sharpened the end, and wrote a letter with it. Don't you remember?"

"Perhaps I left it on the writing desk, then," said Rikky.

But it wasn't there. Higgle remembered something else. "Winks," he said, "you wanted to play bows and arrows and

you took the feather to use as an arrow. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, I remember," said Winks, "but Rikky borrowed it after that. He wanted to clean his pipe with it. I remember thinking that it was a very silly thing to do with such a fine feather."

"Oh, yes, I did take it," said Rikky, "but it was too big to go into the stem of my pipe so I put it back into the vase."

Nobbly began to look really angry. The things people did with his feather!

"I won't live with people like you," he shouted at Higgle, Rikky and Winks. "I shall go and live with my Aunt Jenny!"

He rushed out of the room, flung on his coat and hat and snatched his stick. He slammed the front door and marched off down the garden.

Higgle, Rikky and Winks rushed to the window, feeling very upset. They all gave a shout.

"Hey, Nobbly, wait a minute!"

Nobbly stopped, "What's the matter? Have you found my tippity feather?"

"Yes! We know where it is!" yelled the three, and they ran out into the garden. Higgle whipped Nobbly's hat off his head and shouted, "There's the tippity feather—in your hat. You put it there yourself this morning to make your hat look smarter!"

Sure enough, there was the tippity feather in Nobbly's hat. Nobbly looked at it. He went very red indeed. He looked at the others.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I'm really very, very . . ."

"It's all right," said Higgle, Rikky and Winks, putting their arms round him. "Come back and have some lemonade. Higgle has just made some."

"And bring that tippity feather with you," said Higgle, with a grin, "because I've a feeling that the lemonade needs stirring, and we *might* use the feather for that!"

The Runaway Teddy Bear

One day Peter went to see his cousin Susie. She was sitting in the garden nursing a big teddy bear.

"What a fine teddy!" said Peter. "Is he yours?"

"Yes, I had him for my birthday," said Susie, hugging him close. "But if I'm not careful he runs away!"

"Runs away!" said Peter, in surprise. "But how can he, Susie? He's not real."

"He's just as real as a teddy bear *can* be," said Susie. "And it's quite true, Peter. He *does* run away. He doesn't like being with anybody but me. When I lent him to Linda, over the road, he ran away as fast as anything!"

"Where did he run to?" asked Peter.

"Not very far," said Susie, "because I saw him going, and caught him before he was out of sight. But I'm always afraid that he'll go right away one day, and then I'll never find him again. And that would make me very sad, because I do love him so."

Just at that moment Susie's mother called her indoors.

"Susie, Susie!" she cried. "Your new shoes have just arrived, and I want you to try them on."

"I shan't be a minute," said Susie. She popped her teddy down on the chair she had been sitting on, and ran off.

Peter looked at the bear, and the bear looked back at Peter.

"I don't believe that story of Susie's about the teddy running away," thought Peter. "Whoever heard of bears going off like that?"

The bear still stared at Peter. The little boy got up, and went towards Susie's chair. The bear looked alarmed, and for a

moment Peter thought he trembled.

"That's nonsense!" he said to himself. "It's only a toy teddy! I'll pick him up and cuddle him till Susie comes back. He looks lovely and cuddly."

He picked up the teddy bear, and gave him a good hug. All at once he felt the bear kick out, and begin to struggle in his arms.

"Oh! Oh! Let me go!" he cried in a voice just like a growl, very deep and grunty.

In surprise and alarm Peter let go. The bear dropped from his arms, bounced on the ground and then jumped to his feet. In a trice he was running away as fast as he could go. Peter watched him in the greatest astonishment.

Then suddenly he began to think of Susie.

"Oh dear! Whatever will she say when she finds her teddy gone?" he said. "I must try to catch him!"

Off he went after the bear. The little brown animal could run very fast, and he was racing down the garden like the wind. Peter tore after him, calling loudly:

"Hie! Hie! Teddy bear, stop! Susie wants you! Hie! Hie!"

But the bear didn't stop. On he went and on. He reached the end of the garden, and ran through the little gate that led onto the lane. Peter followed after, puffing and panting. Down the lane went the bear, and over the stile that led to Breezy Hill. Then up the hill he raced as fast as he could go.

Over the stile went Peter, and up the hill too. He was gaining on the bear, and he thought that surely he would soon catch him.

Suddenly the teddy dived under a blackberry bush and disappeared. Peter forced his way underneath too, and could find no sign of the bear at all. But he found something very curious.

Let into the hillside, well hidden by the blackberry bush, was a small yellow door. There was a handle on it, very brightly polished.

"He must have gone in there!" said Peter to himself. "Well, I'll go too!"

He turned the bright handle, and opened the door. Inside was a tiny room, and sitting at a table in the middle was an old brownie, pouring himself out a cup of strong tea.

"Well really!" he said, in a very cross voice, as Peter came in. "First a bear bursts in, and now you. And neither of you has the good manners to knock!"

"Oh, I'm very sorry!" said Peter, so full of astonishment to see a real live brownie that he hardly knew what he was saying. "Oh really, I'm very sorry. But that bear belongs to my cousin Susie, and he has run away. Do you know where he went to? He doesn't seem to be anywhere here."

"He's gone out of my back door," said the brownie, putting a large lump of sugar into his cup. "If you go after him you'll probably see him catch the green train that goes to Toyland."

"Is there a railway anywhere near here?" asked Peter in amazement. "I thought we were six miles from the nearest railway. That's what my mother always told me, and she

generally knows everything."

"Well, she's wrong this time," said the brownie. "You go through that door at the back there, and follow the passage till you come to the railway line. That's where you'll find the bear."

Peter thanked him, and pushed open a little door at the back of the room. It led onto a narrow passage, very winding, and lighted by a row of glow-worms hanging in little lamps from the roof. Peter ran down the passage, and came at last to what he thought must be a railway line—but it looked so small and narrow that he wondered what kind of train could run on such tiny lines.

Just at that moment a train came puffing up. It was very small indeed, not much bigger than Peter's big wooden engine at home. All the carriages were open trucks. Peter looked round for the bear. He must be somewhere near, and he wanted to catch him before he got onto the train.

The engine gave a funny little whistle, and stopped with such a jolt that all the passengers inside the trucks were nearly thrown out. Peter didn't get in, because he couldn't see the bear and he didn't want to go off in a train without him. The engine gave another funny little whistle, and started off again. It had not gone more than a few yards when Peter saw the teddy bear come out from a corner and throw himself into a truck.

"Bother!" cried the little boy. "He's gone after all! *Now* what am I do to?"

He started to run after the train, and shouted loudly. A sandy rabbit who was in the last truck, heard him, and waved to him excitedly to come on. Peter ran along the line as fast as he could, and to his delight he saw the train stopping at a signal that was against it. He got up to the last truck just in time, climbed in as the signal arm moved, and the train went on again.

"A near squeak," said the sandy rabbit, putting on an enormous pair of glasses, and looking at Peter through them. "You should allow yourself more time, young man."

"I'm after that bear in one of the middle carriages," said Peter. "He ran away from my cousin Susie, who loves him very much."

"Well, I hope you catch him," said the rabbit, opening a newspaper, and beginning to read. "You caught the train, so you seem quite good at catching, don't you?"

Peter wanted to ask him a lot of questions, but he didn't like to say any more, because the rabbit was reading so very solemnly. He looked round the truck. There were only two other passengers there, and one was a most unpleasant-looking rat. Peter felt that he couldn't possibly ask him anything. The other passenger was a person rather like a wizard. He was fast asleep, and snored so loudly that he almost drowned the noise that the train was making.

For some time the train ran through long dark tunnels, and then came suddenly out into the open air. It went up a very steep hill, and ran down the other side so quickly that Peter had to clutch tightly to the sides of the truck, for he was almost tipped out. The wizard, who was still fast asleep, did not hold tight, and he *was* flung out.

"Ooh!" said Peter, in fright, "he's gone!"

"He's used to it," said the rabbit, glancing up from his paper. "He's always trying to get to a station a good bit ahead, but he never gets farther than here, because he falls asleep in that tunnel and gets pitched out on Sugar-Loaf Hill."

"But doesn't he hurt himself?" asked Peter, in surprise.

"You can't have known many wizards if you think they ever get hurt," said the rabbit, scornfully. He took off his glasses and put them carefully in a case.

"I get off at the next station," he said. "The one after that is Toyland, where your friend the bear will probably get out.

Good-bye."

The train ran into a tiny station, and stopped just long enough for the rabbit and one or two other passengers to alight. Peter leaned over the side of his truck to see that the teddy didn't get out too. He saw the bear looking at him from one of the trucks in the middle, and he waved to him.

"Don't be afraid of me!" he cried. "Let me take you back to Susie."

The bear drew back his head, and the engine gave its funny little whistle. Off it went, and Peter watched the country they passed by. It was very pretty, for there was sunshine everywhere, and every meadow and hillside was full of bright flowers. All the trees bore gay flowers too, and Peter thought he had never seen anything quite so pretty.

Suddenly the countryside changed. The trees became stiff and wooden, and the farms were very prim and proper. The cows in the field walked about in jerks, and so did the farmer's men.

"Why, the trees look just like those on my toy farm at home!" said Peter, in surprise.

"What to you expect?" said the rat, in a sharp voice. "This is Toyland."

Peter said no more. He didn't like the look of the rat at all. He had such sharp teeth and looked so hungry. Peter leaned out of the truck to see if Toyland Station was anywhere near. Away in the distance he saw it, and he made up his mind to keep a good look out to see if the teddy bear really *did* get out.

The train ran into the station. Peter kept a close watch to see who got out. He saw a mole carrying a bag, a gnome with a long beard, a sharp-eyed weasel, and a very prickly hedgehog. But no bear at all.

"That's funny," said Peter. "I suppose he must be getting out farther on."

The train began to start off again. Peter put his head in, and

then looked at the rat, who was laughing loudly.

"Ho, ho!" he laughed. "The bear was too clever for you! He got out on the other side of the train, and ran across the line so that you shouldn't see him! See, there he goes!"

Peter looked to where the rat was pointing. Sure enough, there was the bear, running as fast as he could into a wood on the other side of the line.

"Why didn't you tell me before?" asked Peter, crossly. "Now I've lost him!"

But the train was not going very fast, and Peter suddenly thought he could jump out without hurting himself. So he opened the carriage door, and sprang off. He nearly rolled over, but just managed to save himself in time.

Then he ran after the bear. Into the wood he went, and hearing a panting noise some distance in front of him, he went that way. Soon he came to a doll's house set in the midst of the wood. There was no sign of the bear, so Peter thought that he must have gone into the house. He knocked at the door.

A very pretty little doll opened it, and stared in surprise at Peter.

"Is there a teddy bear living here?" asked Peter, politely.

"No," said the doll. "Oh, listen! What's that?"

Peter listened. He heard a curious noise like the sound of something being wound up.

"That's our clockwork motor car!" cried the doll. "Someone's stealing it!"

Peter ran round to where a tiny garage stood—just in time to see the teddy bear whizz out in a toy motor car!

"Oh, *bother*!" he cried. "I've just missed him again! I'm chasing that bear and can't seem to catch him at all!"

"Catch the bus that comes by a in few minutes!" cried the doll in excitement. "Our car can't go very fast."

"All right," said Peter. "Is that it?"

He pointed to where a bright red bus was coming along in

the distance.

"Yes," said the doll. "The bear is sure to go the same way as the bus, because there is only one road through the wood, and this is it. Quick! Get on the bus!"

Peter hopped on, waved good-bye to the doll, and sat down. No one came to ask him to pay his fare, and he was the only passenger. After some time he saw the motor car in front, with the bear driving it.

"I shall soon catch him!" thought Peter. But just as the bus came up to the motor, the bear turned into a side road and drove along it swiftly.

Peter pulled the cord to stop the bus—but it wouldn't stop! So he leapt off, sat down hard in the road, and tried to get his breath back. Then up he jumped and tore off into the side road after the bear.

He followed the marks of the wheels for a good way, and at last came to a tiny cottage. In front of it was the toy motor car, but there was no one in it.

"Well, he must have gone into that cottage," said Peter. "I'll creep up and see. I shan't knock at the door in case it

warns him, and he runs off again."

So he crept up to a window and peeped in. Inside he saw a very queer sight.

There were two big bears there, and the little one he had been chasing. In a cradle lay a much smaller one. His bear was crying bitterly, and was being cuddled by one of the big bears.

"I'm so homesick," said the little bear. "Do let me stay at home, Mother."

"You know you can't," said the big bear. "This is very naughty of you, Teddy."

Peter jumped in at the window. The little bear gave a squeal and buried his face in his mother's arms.

"Excuse me," said Peter, politely. "But may I have that bear? He belongs to Susie, my cousin, and she would be dreadfully upset if she thought he was lost. She loves him very much."

"Oh, you naughty bear!" said his mother. "How dare you run away when someone loves you? Whatever made you do such a foolish thing?"

"I don't think he likes anyone except Susie to cuddle him," said Peter. "I picked him up, and he ran away from me. I wasn't going to hurt him, I only wanted to love him, you know. He is so cuddly."

"I am very much ashamed of him," said the father bear, in a deep voice. "I am afraid we have spoilt him. You know the story of the 'Three Bears' I expect? Well, I am the Father Bear, this is the Mother Bear, and your cousin's teddy is the Little Bear. We made a great fuss of him. He had his own little chair, his own little dish for porridge, and his own soft little bed. But he was naughty and grew up very spoilt."

"So when we had another baby bear, we decided he must be sent away," said the mother bear. "We gave him to Santa Claus to take to your cousin Susie, for we knew she was kind and would love him. But he is silly and very shy. We would be glad if you would take him back to Susie safely. Tell her to put butter on his feet every night for a week, and then he won't run away any more."

"I will," said Peter, feeling very much astonished to hear such a queer story. "Come along, teddy bear, you must be good and come back with me. Susie loves you, and wants you back."

The little bear hugged his mother hard, and then wiped his tears away.

"I'll be good now," he said. He came over to Peter and put his paw into the little boy's hand.

"How can we get back to the garden as quickly as possible?" asked Peter.

"I'll get the Spotted Woodpecker to take you," said the father bear. "He nests in the wood at the end of Susie's garden, and is a very old friend of ours. He used to bring us news of Little Bear every day."

He went outside and whistled three times. Down flew a beautiful spotted woodpecker, with a splash of red on his head.

"But we're much too big to get onto his back!" cried Peter.

"Try it and see!" said the father bear.

So Peter tried—and dear me, as soon as he touched the soft feathers of the woodpecker, he became very small, and so did

the teddy bear. They sat on the bird's back, and held tightly. Up he went into the air, and they waved good-bye to the two bears below.

In a very short time they were over Susie's garden. Down they went to the grass. Peter jumped off, and pulled the bear with him. At once they both shot up to their right size, and the woodpecker seemed very small indeed.

"Isn't that wonderful!" said Peter, feeling rather giddy. "Susie! Susie! Where are you? I've got such an adventure to tell you!"

Susie came running up.

"Wherever have you been?" she cried. "I've been looking everywhere for you! Oh, and there's my darling teddy bear! I was so afraid he might have run away again!"

"That's just what he did do, and I went after him!" said Peter. He told Susie all that had happened, and she sat nursing the bear in the greatest astonishment.

"Oh, the naughty little bear!" she said. "However shall I teach him that he mustn't run away any more?"

"Put butter on the soles of his feet every night for a week," said Peter. "That's what his mother advised you to do."

So for seven nights Susie buttered her teddy bear's feet —and he has never once run away again, and she really doesn't think he will now.

If *your* teddy ever does the same, just remember to put butter on his feet. You may be sure that will quite cure him.

Grandpa Twinkle

In Lemon Village there lives an old man called Grandpa Twinkle. His eyes are very twinkly and that is why he is called Grandpa Twinkle.

At Christmas he goes to stay with his two little grandchildren, Mary and Joe—but sometimes they are sad because Grandpa Twinkle does not believe in Santa Claus.

"Stuff and nonsense!" Grandpa Twinkle cries, every time Mary or Joe talk about Santa Claus.

But listen to what happened last Christmas Eve!

Grandpa Twinkle went to bed and fell fast asleep. Suddenly, something fell plop into his room. Grandpa Twinkle sat up and lit his candle. Something else fell plop. It was a red ball! It bounced on the rug and then ran under the bed.

"My goodness! This is very odd," said Grandpa to himself.

Then something else fell with a clang into the fireplace. Grandpa looked—it was a small clockwork train!

"Most odd!" said Grandpa again, and he got out of bed. A doll fell down on to the rug and said, "Ma-Ma!"

"Oh, oh!" squeaked Grandpa and quickly hopped back into bed. But the doll said nothing else.

"What a funny dream I am having!" said Grandpa Twinkle. "Whatever will happen next?"

Just then a wooden horse, a top, a box of soldiers and a book fell all in a heap down the chimney! And then down came two large black boots, a red cloak—and SANTA CLAUS was inside them!

"Oh, hallo!" he said to Grandpa. "Sorry to bother you. I am Santa Claus and my sack has a hole in it. Some of my toys have been falling out."

"Ha! Ha!" said Grandpa. "I do not believe in Santa Claus, so you must be only a dream! Ha! Ha!"

"Ha! ha! to you!" said Santa Claus, beaming at Grandpa. "Will you help me to pick up these toys? They are for Mary and Joe."

Grandpa began to help Santa Claus to pick up all the toys that had fallen down the chimney.

"I think we have got them all now," said Santa at last. "Many thanks. Oh—where is that red ball?"

They hunted and hunted but they could not find it.

"It does not matter," said Santa at last as he slung his sack on his back.

"May I borrow a safety-pin from you to pin up the hole in my sack? Then I shall creep away to Mary's bedroom and fill her stocking. I had to come down your chimney as there is not one in Mary's room," he whispered to Grandpa as he went.

"Goodnight. Sleep well!"

"I am sleeping well, thank you," said Grandpa. "I know this is a dream. I tell you, I do not believe in you, Santa!"

In the morning Grandpa awoke.

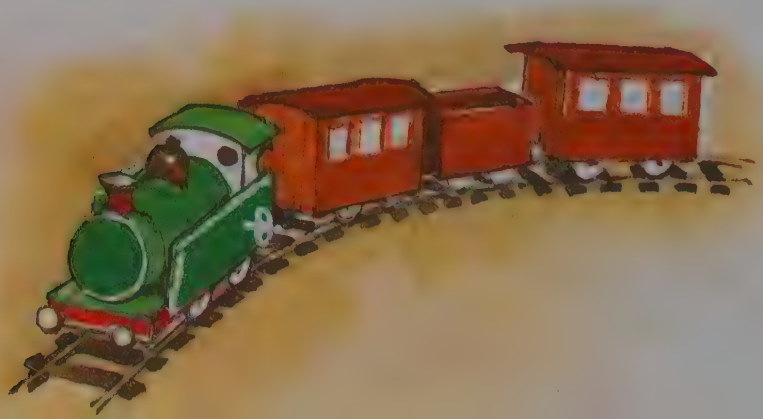
"It is Christmas morning," he cried. "I must give my presents to Mary and Joe." So out he hopped to feel under the bed for his slippers. And his hand felt *not* his slippers but something round! What do you think it was?

Yes, it was the red ball that they had not been able to find the night before!

"But it was a dream!" cried Grandpa. "I do not *believe* in Santa Claus!"

He ran to tell Mary and Joe all about it.

"I am sure you know what *they* said."



The Little Candy House

Once upon a time there were two little girls, one called Rosalind and one called Rosemary. They lived in a cottage with their father and mother, and helped their mother in her work.

Rosemary was sweet and merry, but Rosalind was sulky and bad-tempered. She teased her sister, and often made her unhappy. Rosemary was never unkind, but sometimes her merry face grew sad when Rosalind pulled her hair and pinched her. She often did her sister's work for her, but Rosalind never thanked her or did her a good deed in return.

One day it was baking day and the girls' mother told them to bake bread, cakes and tarts.

"I have to go out today," she said, "and I want you two girls to finish the baking for me. You must each do half, and when I come home, it must all be finished."

She put on her hat and coat and went out. Rosalind at once made a horrid face at Rosemary.

"*You* can do all the work!" she said. "I'm going to read my book."

"No, Rosalind, you really must help me," said Rosemary. "I shall never get it all done by myself. There is such a lot to do."

But Rosalind sat down in a corner and wouldn't lift a finger. Rosemary sighed and set to work. She was a good little baker. Rosalind was a bad cook—she let the cakes burn and the tarts grow as black as cinders. As for her bread, it was horrid.

Rosemary worked hard all the day. The baking was only done once a fortnight, so there was a lot to do. She made two big fruit tarts, twenty little jam tarts, an apple pudding, four cakes and thirty little buns, as well as baking many loaves of bread. Rosalind wouldn't even help to wash up the dirty dishes.

Rosemary felt cross. She so often did Rosalind's work, and she was getting tired of it.

"Rosalind," she said, as she put away the last dish, "you are very selfish. This is the last time I shall do your work for you. When our mother comes home I shall tell her that you sat in a corner and read all day and that I have done everything. It is not fair for you to take half the praise when you have done nothing at all."

Then Rosalind flew into a temper. She rushed at Rosemary, pulled her hair, pinched her arm, and kicked her on the ankle. Then she took the apple pudding and flung it on the floor so that it smashed into pulp.

"*I* shall tell our mother that *you* spoilt the pudding!" said Rosalind, angrily. "So there! If you are going to tell tales, I shall too!"

Rosemary was so upset when she saw her lovely pudding on the floor that she burst into tears and ran straight out of the house. She went to the woods and followed a path there, winding in and out of the trees till she came to a little dell she knew. Then she sat down and wept bitterly. It was too bad of Rosalind to be so horrid.

Soon she got up and began to walk through the wood once more.

She thought she was taking the homeward path, but because of her tears, she took the wrong one, and soon she was lost.

She stood beneath an oak tree, wondering which way to go. She was very hungry, for she had eaten nothing since she had begun her work that morning. She wandered on, looking for some sign of a woodman's cottage, so that she might ask her way.

Suddenly she came to a little clearing, and in the middle of it stood the queerest cottage she had ever seen. Its walls were made of currant cake, trimmed with little jam tarts, its windows were outlined in bars of chocolate, the chimneys were of gingerbread, the doorsteps were of toffee and the door was studded with chocolate buns.

"Well!" said Rosemary, in surprise. "What a funny house! It's made of cakes, tarts, chocolate and candy! I wonder who lives there."

She went up to the door and knocked. No one came to open it and Rosemary knocked again. Still no one came, and when the little girl tried the handle she found that the door was fast shut.

She was disappointed, and tears came into her eyes again. She had so hoped to find someone there who could tell her the

way home. She sat down on the doorstep and waited. Soon the smell of the cottage tickled her nose—it was a lovely smell of newly made cake, chocolate and candy.

"Surely it wouldn't matter if I ate just a little bit of the house," thought Rosemary. "I *am* so hungry. There's this little jam tart here—it looks so nice."

She broke off a small jam tart and ate it hungrily. Then she took a little cake and broke off a bit of chocolate too, to eat with it. How good it all was!

But suddenly she jumped up, startled. An angry voice came from the cottage and frightened Rosemary.

"Who is eating my candy house? How dare you, how dare you!"

"Please, I'm very sorry," said Rosemary. "I was very hungry. I did knock twice but nobody came."

"Well, how was I to know you weren't a robber!" said the

scolding voice, and the door flew open. In the entrance stood a witch-woman, very bent and old, with a tall pointed hat. She shook her fist at Rosemary and grabbed her by the arm.

"You come indoors with me, and I'll see what punishment you shall have for picking at my house like that!" said the old dame. "Dear, dear, to think it was only last week I baked all those things and made myself a nice little candy house, and now here comes a nasty little girl who thinks it is only made for eating."

"Do forgive me," begged Rosemary. "Won't you let me make you a few jam tarts and cakes, and then you can trim up your house again? I can bake quite well, really I can."

"No girls bake properly nowadays," grumbled the old woman. "Sit down child. Why, you're shivering! Come to the fire and I will make you a pot of tea. I can see you will try to make up for pulling my house to pieces."

Soon Rosemary was sitting by the fire and drinking hot tea. She was not so frightened of the old dame now, but she really was very sorry that she had upset her so much.

"It is getting dark now, and I shall never find my way home tonight," said Rosemary. "If you would be kind enough to let me stay with you for the night, old dame, I will be up early tomorrow and do any baking you want done."

"Very well," said the witch-woman. "I will see how you can cook. But woe betide you if you do badly!"

She made up a bed for Rosemary by the fire, and very soon there was nothing to be heard in the little candy house but the fall of the wood in the fire. The old dame had gone to her bed in the room off the kitchen, and Rosemary, tired out, was fast asleep.

Early next morning, before the old woman was awake, Rosemary slipped from her bed. She made it neatly and folded up the rug. Then she dressed herself and went to the cupboard to see what the old woman had there. There was flour, sugar, butter and milk, and everything else that Rosemary needed for baking. She made up the fire and peeped inside the oven. Now she would begin her work!

It was very early. The old woman still slept in the little bedroom. Rosemary worked hard. She made some beautiful jam tarts, and some dear little chocolate buns with coconut on the top. Then she thought that perhaps the old witch would like an apple pudding for her breakfast and she made one of her very best.

She peeped into the little bedroom. The dame was just stirring. Rosemary slipped back into the kitchen and made a pot of tea. She put it on a tray and crept into the bedroom.

"Are you awake, dame?" she asked. "Here is some tea for you."

"Well, well!" said the witch, sitting up in surprise. "What a nice kind girl!"

"I've done all the baking," said Rosemary. "And I made an apple pudding for you, dame. Would you like some for your breakfast? It's just ready."

"I could just fancy a taste of apple pudding," said the old woman. "But there's few that can make it to my liking, maiden. Bring it in."

When the witch saw the fine apple pudding she was delighted. She ate some and said it was just as good as hers. She and Rosemary finished it together, and soon they were very good friends.

"Now let me see what work you have done this morning," said the old dame, and she trotted out to the kitchen. Wasn't she pleased when she saw all Rosemary's lovely tarts and cakes!

"Why, you're as good a cook as I am myself!" she cried. "A maid like you would make a good little wife. You should wed a prince, for you're worth your weight in gold!"

Rosemary cleaned the little cottage well, and then she asked the old witch if she might go.

"Yes," said the old woman, "though I'm sorry to part with you, my dear, you're such a merry, hard-working little maid. Wait! Before you go, you shall have a present."

She went to a drawer and took out a little box. In it were some brooches. Some were of gold, and looked rich. Others were ordinary, set in the shape of birds.

"Choose which you would like," said the old woman.

Rosemary did not like to take a gold one, for she was only a peasant maid. Besides, she could not choose the best there, that would be greedy. So she took a little brown brooch in the form of a tiny bird.

"Thank you very much," she said, and she pinned it to her dress.

"It is a cold day and you have no cloak," said the witch. "You shall have one of mine. See, which will you have?"

She took the girl to where six cloaks hung in a row. They were all turned inside out so that only their linings showed. There were two lined with gold, one with silver, and one with silk. The others were lined with cloth and one was rather torn.

"I'll have this one," said Rosemary, taking the torn one. "I cannot take your good ones, dame—you are too kind to me."

"Come and see me again one day," said the old woman, and kissed Rosemary lovingly. Then she told her the way to go home. The little girl ran off happily, the warm cloak round her shoulders—but when she came into the sunshine, she stopped in astonishment! The cloak might have a torn cloth lining—but the outer side was of shimmering gold! Diamonds shone here and there and rows of pearls trimmed the neck.

"Well!" cried Rosemary in wonder. "I chose the oldest—and it is the best of the lot! Whatever will my mother say?"

Soon she was home—but her mother greeted her with

scolding words and frowns.

"You naughty girl, where have you been all this time? How dare you leave your sister to do all that baking and how wicked of you to throw the pudding on the floor!"

"Mother, Mother, I didn't!" cried Rosemary. "*I* did all the baking! And it was Rosalind who spoilt the pudding!"

But her mother did not believe her. Rosemary ran away and sat down sadly by the well. Why, her mother had been so angry she had not even noticed her lovely cloak!

As the girl looked at it, her spirits rose and she felt happy again. Suddenly she felt as if she must sing, and she opened her mouth—and lo and behold, she carolled as sweetly as a nightingale! The brown bird on the little brooch she had chosen was a magic nightingale, and whoever wore the brooch had the gift of song.

So sweet was Rosemary's voice that everyone gathered round to listen. Suddenly there came the sound of a horse, and who should ride up but the prince of that land, very straight and handsome.

When he saw the pretty maiden sitting there in her glittering cloak, singing sweetly as a nightingale, he straightaway fell in love with her.

"You shall marry me!" he cried. "Your face is as sweet as your voice!"

"I must ask my mother first," said Rosemary. So the two of them went to the cottage and much to the mother's surprise and Rosalind's envy, the prince asked for Rosemary as his wife.

What a to-do there was then! The prince said that he would come the next day to fetch Rosemary, and she should be his lovely bride. He rode off, and the maiden's mother at once began to get things ready.

"You must wear your white silk frock," she said, "and that wonderful cloak you have got. Did the prince give it to you?

And how comes it that you sang so beautifully as you sat by the well?"

Then Rosemary told her mother and sister of all that had happened in the little candy house with the old witch. Rosalind listened enviously. How she wished *she* could get a glittering cloak too!

The next day Rosemary was wedded to the prince and everyone said what a beautiful bride she was. Rosalind frowned and pouted when she saw her sister made a princess. *She* meant to be one as well.

"I shall go to the candy house and get a cloak like Rosemary's," she said to herself. "Then I shall marry a prince too."

So the next day she set off through the wood and very soon came to the little candy house. Her walk had made her hungry and she began to pick tarts and cakes off the wall as fast as she could.

"What are you doing, what are you doing!" screamed the old witch, suddenly running out of the door. "You naughty girl, pulling my house to pieces like that."

"Don't get into such a temper," said Rosalind. "I'll bake for you tomorrow, if you'll let me spend the night here."

The old dame remembered how well the other girl had worked, and she bade Rosalind enter.

"You must be up early if you are going to bake," she said. "So do not oversleep. You may rest on that bed by the fire."

Rosalind slept soundly. She woke early, but she was so warm and comfortable that she did not want to get up and work. "Let the old woman get up first," she said to herself. "I am her guest—she should bring me my breakfast!" So the lazy girl lay there and did nothing. The old dame awoke and was disappointed to find that this girl did not bring her any tea. She got up and went into the kitchen. There was Rosalind, lying yawning.

"You lazy maid!" scolded the old witch. "Didn't I say you were to get up early and bake? Rouse yourself quickly."

Rosalind was afraid and got up quickly. The old woman made a pot of tea and some buttery toast, but she did not offer any to Rosalind.

"When you have baked, then you shall eat," she said. The maiden sulked and said nothing. She got ready the baking things, and made up the fire.

Rosalind was not good at making cakes and pies. She had so often made Rosemary do them for her that she did not properly know the way. So she did very badly. Her tarts were all burnt and her cakes were black. The witch was very angry.

"So this is the way you wasted my good flour and butter!" she scolded. "You lazy girl, anyone can see you have never taken the trouble to learn your work properly. Leave my cottage at once, or I will certainly beat you."

"You gave my sister a brooch and a cloak," said Rosalind, sulkily. "Aren't you going to treat me the same?"

The witch looked at Rosalind slyly.

"Very well," she said. "You shall have the same choice as your sister—though you are as different from that merry-hearted maid as chalk is from cheese!"

She pulled the box of brooches from the drawer, and bade Rosalind choose one. The greedy girl took the one she thought the richest—a little frog in pure gold. She pinned it to her frock, and asked for her cloak.

"Choose!" said the witch, and took her to where the cloaks hung in a row, only the linings showing. Rosalind picked one with a golden lining and put it over her shoulder. Now indeed she would look beautiful and would marry a prince!

Without saying a word of thanks, she ran out of the cottage and went towards her home. She heard the witch laughing loudly as she shut the door of the candy house, but she did not know why.

Alas for Rosalind! Although her cloak had a golden lining, the outer side was all moth-eaten and worn. Even as she walked home the cloak fell into holes, and soon she saw that it was no better than rags. How angry she was!

"Where have you been, you naughty girl?" cried her mother when she saw her.

"I shan't tell you," answered Rosalind rudely and ran out to the well, crying. Then she remembered how Rosemary had sung so sweetly there, and she opened her mouth to sing too.

But alas! She had chosen a frog for her brooch and she could only croak dismally. People gathered round her and laughed. Then up galloped a horseman, a brother of the prince who had married Rosemary. He had heard that Rosemary had a sister, and he thought that if she were one half so sweet as his brother's bride, he could not do better than marry her.

But when he saw the sulky girl in her ragged cloak, croaking dolefully by the well, he turned his horse's head homewards and galloped away again. This was no bride for him!

As she saw the prince vanish from sight, the unhappy girl burst into tears and, throwing away her cloak and brooch, ran sobbing to her mother.

"Now that Rosemary has gone, you will have to work hard," said her mother. "Come, set the fire going and we will do the washing!"

So while merry, kind-hearted Rosemary sat by her prince and smiled, sulky Rosalind had to do all the work in her mother's cottage—and soon she grew into a hard-working, sensible maid, and married a farmer's son nearby. But never, never, did she tell him of her visit to the little candy house!

The Little Blue Boat

The little blue boat lay in the corner of the shop window. It was called *Saucy Sue*.

"I'll buy that boat for Billy," said Mummy and she went into the shop. So she bought it and took it home for Billy.

But Billy didn't like it. "Oh, Mummy," he said. "I want a steamer or a battleship. Not a silly little boat like that."

And he threw it out into the garden. He was a spoilt and silly little boy.

The boat was sad as it lay on the garden path. It thought someone would come along and stand on it before it even got near any water. All boats long for water but Billy forgot all about it.

When the rain came it washed all the blue paint off the boat. The rain went on and on. A big puddle came round the boat. Soon the puddle got so deep that the boat found itself floating. How happy it was!

The puddle grew bigger. The garden was flooded and the boat floated down it just as if it was on a stream.

At the bottom of the garden was a real stream and the water ran into it, carrying the little boat with it. Soon it was sailing down the stream, as happy as could be.

But the little boat began to feel lonely. There had been so many toys to talk to in the toy shop. Now there was nobody at all. Neither the fishes nor the water-beetles ever spoke to the little boat.

Then the little boat floated into a duck-pond. A duck found it and carried it to the side of the pond. When the duck found

that little boats are not good to eat, it threw it on the bank.

"What has that duck got?" asked a little girl's voice as she came running up. "Oh, look! It's a little boat. Mummy, I haven't got a boat. May I have this one?"

"Well, we shall never know who it belongs to, so I suppose you can have it," said her mother. The little girl picked up the boat joyfully.

"All its paint has been washed off and it hasn't got a name," she said, "but I don't mind. It's a dear little boat. Perhaps Daddy will paint it for me."

So the little girl carried the boat home and her father painted it red for her. It looked very smart. "I'll paint a name on it for you," said Daddy. "We'll give it your name, Susan. We'll call it the *Saucy Sue*."

The little boat was so pleased when it got its own name back again.

"It looks lovely now," said Susan. "I shall sail it in my bath every night. It can live in the bathroom with my duck and my goldfish."

Now the boat was very happy. It had three friends—Susan, the duck and the goldfish.

One day a little boy came to spend the night with Susan's family. His name was Billy, the same Billy who had thrown the little boat out into the garden.

When Billy had his bath at night, he saw the little red boat. He said to Susan, "I like your boat. It's just like a boat I had once, mine was called *Saucy Sue*, too, but it was blue. Will you give me your boat?"

"No," said Susan. "I love it. It floats in the bath with me every night."

The little boat was very glad when it heard that. It thought that it was very lucky to have found such a good home!

The Enchanted Cloak

Once upon a time the Princess Peronel asked Thimble, the pixie, to make her a very special cloak.

She came to see Thimble in the middle of the night. It was very exciting for Thimble, who was in bed and fast asleep. She had to get up and put on her dressing-gown, and curtsey to the princess when she opened the door.

"Thimble, this is a secret," whispered the princess, looking all round to make sure there was no one else there. "I want this cloak to wear on Midsummer Night—and I have two very special spells that I want you to sew into it as you make it."

"What spells?" asked Thimble, going red with excitement.

"One is a spell that will make me know everything as soon as I put it on," said Peronel. "And the other is powerful magic that will grant my wishes. Here are the two spells—do be careful of them."

"It will be a very magic cloak," said Thimble. "What do you want me to make it of?"

"I want it made of the purple twilight," said the princess. "That's difficult, I know—but maybe you can get some of the purple. Line it with some silver-dawn sky, will you? And sew the spells in all the time. Don't tell anyone, whatever you do!"

Thimble promised. She was very pleased to have such important work to do.

"You see, I want to wear the magic cloak on Midsummer Night, and be able to grant wishes to those pixies and fairies who deserve it," said the princess. "I shall know everything as soon as I put on the cloak—so I shall know which pixies deserve to have wishes given to them and which don't. It will be marvellous."

She said good-bye and went. Thimble was so excited that she couldn't go to sleep any more that night. She took her sharpest scissors and flew up to the middle part of the eastern sky. She waited till dawn—and then she cut a silvery piece of the sky right out, folded it up, and flew down to earth again. Now she had the lining for the cloak! A cloud came to fill up the hole she had made.

She asked a brownie to get her some purple twilight, and he came back the next night with a big roll of it under his arm. It was blue-purple and very lovely.

"It's velvet," he said. "Did you know that the twilight was velvet? I didn't. But it is! Feel it!"

"It will make a lovely cloak!" said Thimble, feeling the thick purple velvet. "Thank you, Brownie."

She set to work. She cut out a marvellous cloak that would swing right out round the princess. She lined it with the silver sky, and it shone and shimmered beautifully. All the time she sewed in the two magic spells.

The spells were tiny beads—there were thousands of them! Thimble had to slip them on her needle and sew them into the lining as she worked. The cloak would be very magic when she had finished!

And then one day the Wizard Sly-One looked in at the window and saw Thimble busily sewing. He knew at once that the cloak was a very special one, for he could smell magic with his nose, just as a dog can smell meat from a distance.

"Good day, Thimble," he said. "What a wonderful cloak! Who is it for?"

"I shan't tell you," said Thimble. "Please shut the window and go away."

"You don't talk to wizards like that!" said Sly-One, crossly.

"Yes, I do," said Thimble, firmly. "Go away!"

"I can smell magic in that cloak," said the wizard, slyly. "Will you sell it to me?"

SPELLS

"Certainly not," said Thimble. "It's for somebody else!"

"It's for the princess, isn't it?" said Sly-One, who had been told by an owl that Peronel had been to visit Thimble in the middle of the night.

"I shan't tell you a thing!" said Thimble.

But, all the same, Sly-One found out. He paid a little mouse to go and listen to all that Thimble said to herself—for he knew that Thimble whispered to herself as she worked. So the mean little mouse didn't have much difficulty in finding out the secret.

Thimble whispered as she worked, "This is for the dear princess! She wants to wear it on Midsummer Night—and then she will know everything and will be able to grant wishes. Oh, what a wonderful cloak it will be!"

The little mouse stayed under Thimble's chair and listened to all her whisperings—and then he ran off to tell Sly-One. He was paid by Sly-One, who gave him three pieces of yellow cheese. He was a horrid little mouse, but of great use to the wizard.

"Oho!" thought Sly-One. "This is splendid! So that cloak is enchanted! Well—I must get hold of it somehow and wear it myself on Midsummer Night! Then I shall know everything —and I can wish bad things whenever I want to!"

So one spring night he crept to Thimble's little cottage and opened the window. Just beneath the sill, neatly folded, was the cloak, ready to be packed up and sent to the Princess the next day. It shone curiously in the moonlight, for it was really very magic indeed.

The wizard carefully dragged the shining cloak out of the window. He shut the window—but it creaked, and Thimble woke up. She gave a squeal as she saw Sly-One in the moonlight—and then she gave a much louder scream for she saw that the enchanted cloak was gone!

"You wicked fellow! Bring it back, bring it back!" shouted

Thimble, jumping out of the window. But the wizard was gone. He was nowhere to be seen—and neither was the beautiful cloak.

"And I spent so much time and trouble making it," wept poor Thimble. "Oh, what will the princess say?"

The princess was very worried indeed. "Thimble, it wouldn't matter if the cloak hadn't those two spells in it," she said. "You see, I could do a lot of good with that cloak—but Sly-One will do bad things. How can we get it back?"

Sly-One didn't mean them to get it back. He put it away safely in a room right at the very top of his castle, in a tower that had no windows and no chimney—only a great door that he could lock with three different keys.

Sly-One packed the cloak into a box and put the box in the middle of the room. If anyone opened the box a bell would ring, and then Sly-One would know that someone had come to get the cloak.

"But no one can get into my castle—and no one can get into that top room—and no one can open the box, for I have the key!" chuckled Sly-One. "There it shall stay until Midsummer Night—then I will shake it out and wear it, and the magic in it will be mine. Ha, the things I will do then!"

The Princess Peronel soon found out where Sly-One had put her enchanted cloak, and she was quite in despair.

"No one, *no* one can get it from there!" she sighed. "It is quite, quite impossible. Whatever shall we do? Think hard, Thimble! It is your fault that it has been stolen, you know. You shouldn't have left it so near the window!"

Thimble was just as upset as the princess. She sat and thought all day and night long, wondering what in the world could be done about the magic cloak—and then an idea came into her head. She jumped up at once.

"I can't get the cloak back," she cried, "But I can at least make it unwearable for Sly-One! I will have it spoilt so that he

cannot wear it!"

"But, Thimble, however can you do that?" asked Peronel, in surprise. "It's impossible! Why, we can't even get into the castle, and we certainly can't get into that top room. There are three keys to lock the door—and Sly-One has all of them tied firmly round his waist."

"All the same, I think I know what to do," said Thimble. "I must call in an army of little creatures which we ususally dislike, Princess—but this time they will help us."

"What little creatures?" asked Peronel, in astonishment.

"Clothes-moths!" cried Thimble. "Listen—we'll get hundreds of clothes-moths to creep in somewhere at Sly-One's castle. They can fly up the stairs—and squeeze in through the keyholes—and squash themselves under the lid and into the box where the cloak is."

"And they can lay their eggs there!" cried Peronel, delighted. "And the eggs will turn into grubs, who will gobble up the whole cloak, so that when Sly-One goes to put it on when Midsummer Night is here he will find there is nothing but holes!"

"Yes!" said Thimble. She clapped her hands and called out a string of magic words. In two minutes a cloud of tiny light-brown moths flew in at her window. Thimble gave her orders, and in a cloud they flew out again.

They flew to the castle. They crept in through cracks and holes here and there, under doors and windows. They flew up the winding stairs to the topmost room. They squeezed below the door and through the three keyholes—and there they were in the three-times-locked room!

They went to the big box in the middle of the floor. The lid was tight-fitting, but they found one small place where they

could squeeze in—and in they all went, one by one.

Inside was the wonderful cloak. Each moth chose its own place and laid a batch of eggs. Then they all crept out again and flew off to tell Thimble that her wishes had been obeyed.

Inside the box the eggs hatched out into very tiny grubs. At once they set to work to eat the cloak. All clothes-moth grubs eat clothes of some sort—and these grubs were very hungry indeed. How they ate! How they gobbled! They grew bigger and bigger, fatter and fatter, as they ate the cloak. Only the tiny beads they did not eat, and these fell to the bottom of the box as the grubs ate the cloak.

Midsummer Night came, and Sly-One stamped up the stairs to get out the cloak. Now, at last, he would know everything and would be able to get all his wishes granted. My, what a bad time he would give everyone!

He unlocked the door. He unlocked the box, and then he gave a cry of anger and rage. There was no cloak there!

All that was left of it was a few rags and a handful of tiny beads! The grubs had done their work well! Sly-One did not know that the clothes-moths had been there—he thought that the cloak had been stolen. In a rage he caught up the box and threw it out of the window—beads, rags, grubs, and all!

The beads were scattered in the wind. The rags flew off, too. The grubs fell into the grass. The box smashed to pieces.

A small rabbit nearby saw all this in great astonishment, and ran off to tell Thimble. How delighted she was! She hurried to collect what beads she could find, for they held the magic spells, and she meant to make another cloak as soon as she could for Peronel.

She is making it now—but she hasn't quite found all the beads that got blown away by the wind. So if you find any, keep them carefully, and let her know. Her address is: Miss Thimble Pixie, Oak Tree Corner, Cuckoo Wood, near Fairyland. I hope the second cloak won't be stolen, don't you?

The Magic Pinny-minny Flower

Too-Thin the Magician was making a new spell. He had nearly everything he wanted for it—a bowl of moonlight, a skein of spider's thread, six golden dewdrops, two hairs from a rabbit's tail, and many other things—but there was still one thing he hadn't got.

"I must have a blue pinny-minny flower. Now I wonder where I can get one."

He went out into his garden to think about it. He walked round and round it, up and down the paths, and thought hard. The beds were full of spring daffodils, but Too-Thin didn't notice them. A freckled thrush was singing a new song in the almond tree, but Too-Thin didn't hear it. He didn't even know it was spring-time, for he didn't care about things like that.

He frowned and thought harder than ever. He really *must* have a blue pinny-minny flower, but where to get one he couldn't think.

"I must pin a notice outside my gate, and offer a reward to anyone who can bring me what I want," said the magician at last. So he wrote out a notice and pinned it on his gate. This is what it said:

"Six sacks of gold will be given to anyone who brings a blue pinny-minny flower to Too-Thin the Magician."

Then Too-Thin went indoors and began to stir the dewdrops in the bowl of moonlight.

Now many people passed by Too-Thin's gate and read the notice. Nobody knew where to get a blue pinny-minny flower at all. Many of them wrote to witches they knew, and to

goblins who lived in mountain caves, asking if they could find a blue pinny-minny flower—but no one could.

One day Higgledy, a tiny cobbler pixie, passed by. He was very poor and lived in a tumble-down cottage with no garden. He often used to peep over the wall that ran round Too-Thin's garden, and look at the rows of daffodils there. He wished he could have a garden like it and grow snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils, and roses in the summer-time.

Higgledy read the notice and then his eyes opened in surprise.

"Surely Too-Thin does not mean this," he said. He climbed up to the top of the wall and sat there, looking into the magician's garden. He looked over to the doorway of the house, for he had often seen a tiny plant growing in the stones of the pathway there.

The plant was still there, and Higgledy stared in astonishment.

"Why, there's the pinny-minny plant still growing outside the magician's own door," he said to himself. "I've often seen it when I've looked over the wall. Can it be that the magician doesn't know it's there?"

He jumped over the wall and ran to the door. Yes, it was a pinny-minny plant right enough. Just as he was thinking of knocking at the door and telling the magician, Too-Thin came out, looking rather cross, for he was in a bad temper.

"Now then, now then," he said. "What do you want? Have you come about the eggs?"

"No," said Higgledy, "I'm not the egg-man. I've come about the pinny-minny plant."

"Where is it?" cried the magician. "Have you brought it with you?"

"No," said Higgledy, "you see—"

"Oh, you stupid creature!" cried Too-Thin. "Go and get it at once. Is it in someone's garden? Well, go and pick it! You can pay them for it with the gold I shall give you in return."

Higgledy laughed. He suddenly bent down and picked a blue pinny-minny flower from the plant by his foot. Then he waved it in the magician's face.

"Here it is!" he cried. "You pass it every day when you walk into the garden, and never see it! Oh, Too-Thin, you may be clever at spells, but you are very stupid at other things! Why don't you use your eyes?"

Too-Thin stared in amazement. Why, here was the very flower he had wanted for so long! And to think it grew in his very own garden and he hadn't seen it! He went very red, and took it from Higgledy.

"You shall have the six sacks of gold," he said, "even though the plant grew in my own garden—but you must promise not to tell anyone where you found it, for I don't want to be laughed at."

"I promise," said Higgledy. Then the magician sent him to

fetch a barrow in which he could wheel home his gold, and whilst Higgledy was gone Too-Thin looked round his garden and saw it for the first time.

"I really must use my eyes more!" he said. "Why those daffodils are beautiful! And listen to that thrush! Whatever is the use of being a clever magician if I forget to look at daffodils? Well, well, Higgledy has earned his gold, for he has opened my eyes for me!"

Higgledy was so pleased with his good fortune. He bought a beautiful little cottage with a garden and married a nice little wife. And what do you think he called his new cottage? Why, Pinny-minny Cottage! So if ever you come across it, you'll know who lives there!

The Six Red Wizards

Once upon a time there lived six red wizards. They dwelt in a castle together, and dressed in red cloaks and red pointed hats. Their eyes, however, were as green as the eyes of cats, and it was said that all six wizards could see in the dark.

Their castle stood right in the middle of the town of Mumble, where lived many merry little folk—but since the coming of the wizards, the people of Mumble had not been quite so merry as before.

They were afraid of the red wizards. They didn't like their children to play near the castle in case their shouts annoyed the wizards. They didn't like to hold dances on the village green in case the wizards came and stopped them. They wished the wizards would go away.

But this was just what the six red wizards wouldn't do! They

were very comfortable where they were, and as they were planning a great deal of magic in their castle they were not going to disturb themselves for anyone.

Now they had a servant called Fum, an ugly, bad-tempered little creature. He had served them for many years, and then, one day, when he had made them an apple pie in which he had put salt in mistake for sugar, the six wizards flew into a temper with him.

"Box his ears!" said one, and his ears were boxed.

"Spank him hard!" said another, and he was spanked.

"Kick him well!" cried a third, and he was kicked. Fum let out a howl of rage, picked up the apple pie, and threw it at the wizards. It spilt all over them, and they were half blinded with hot apple juice. Whilst they were wiping their eyes, Fum ran

from the room and disappeared.

They hunted all over the castle for him, but he was gone. He knew quite well that he would be turned into a blade of grass, or a dead leaf if they found him—so he had quickly caught up his little bag, and off he had sped.

He was full of hate for his six unkind masters. He went into the town of Mumble, and made his way to the big house where the mayor of the town lived. He knocked at the door and asked to see him.

"His highness will see you in ten minutes," said the butler. Fum was taken into a little room, and there he waited for ten minutes. Then his highness the mayor of Mumble came in, looking very grand and important.

But he didn't look so grand and important after he had heard what Fum had to say—for Fum gave away all the wizards' secrets, and frightened the mayor very much.

"The wizards are making a marvellous spell," said Fum. "It is nearly finished. When this spell is used, a million soldiers will spring from nothing, and at the wizards' command will march all through Fairyland, destroying every town. They cannot be stopped, for no one can kill them. They will banish the king and queen, and make everyone their slave. The wizards themselves will sit on six red thrones and rule the whole of Fairyland."

"Now this is dreadful!" cried the mayor, his cheeks turning pale. "Are you sure of this, Fum?"

"Quite," said Fum. "Listen, your highness. I will take you and three others by a secret way into the castle, and you shall peep through a hole in the wall and see the wizards at work, making soldiers out of nothing."

So that night the mayor and three others were taken by Fum through a secret passage into the castle, and they peeped through a hole in the wall. There, sure enough, they saw one of the wizards standing in a chalk circle, chanting magic words

and making soldiers appear out of nothing.

The next day the mayor called a meeting and told the townsfolk all that he had seen. He sent a message to the king and queen themselves, and soon all Fairyland was full of fear.

Then a messenger was sent all through the land proclaiming that if anyone could force the wizards to leave the country, he would be made a prince and should marry the princess.

Now it so happened that a wandering seller of lamps and candles heard the messenger proclaiming his news, and he marvelled to think that almost in a night a man such as he might become a prince and marry a princess.

The candle-seller went to a pond and looked at himself in the water. He saw looking back at him a young and merry face, with twinkling eyes, and black curly hair.

"Now," he said, "why should not I be the man who shall become prince and win the lovely princess for my wife?"

With that he made up his mind to try. He journeyed to Mumble, and soon came to the castle of the six red wizards. He stood looking over the wall, wondering what to do.

"Beware!" said an old woman, coming by. "Over a hundred youths have tried to defeat the wizards this week—and not one of them has succeeded. Do you see that big cage full of birds in that window over there? Well, the wizards turned each rash youth into a bird, and there they will be for the rest of their lives."

"Well, I am going to try my luck," said the youth, and he knocked boldly at the castle gate. It swung open and he went in, carrying his candles and his lamps with him.

He climbed a long flight of steps up to the castle door, which slowly opened as he approached it. He stepped through and found himself in a great hall. The six red wizards sat in a row at one end. The youth went up to them and bowed.

"Would you buy new lamps or candles?" he asked. "I have come from afar to sell my wares."

"We want no lamps or candles," said one wizard. "But we need a servant. Do you know anything of magic?"

"I have learnt a little," said the youth.

"Do you work hard?" asked the second wizard.

"Yes, for I have done nothing else all the days of my life," answered the youth.

"Then you shall be our servant," said the third wizard.

"Wait," said the youth. "I am only used to serving wise and powerful masters. I do not work for weaklings. Prove to me that you are learned in magic, and I will be your servant."

"Now this is a bold youth to talk so," said the fifth wizard, angrily.

"Not so," said the sixth. "It is all the better for us if he has been used to powerful masters. He will do our bidding well."

"Prove your power to me," said the youth.

The wizards began to laugh among themselves, for never before had they met such a bold youth.

"Very well," said the first one. "We will show you what we can do."

They meant to frighten the youth, and make him sorry for his bold words, but it was difficult to make him afraid, for he had one of the bravest hearts in the world. He did not tremble when with one accord the wizards turned into roaring lions, nor did he spring back when they changed into a torrent that rushed around his feet.

Then they changed into spiders and began to weave a web round him—but the youth laughed in scorn. They turned into eagles and flapped their wings about his head, but he only smiled. Last of all they made themselves very small and then suddenly very big—but not a shiver or a tremble could they get from the brave candle-seller.

"Ho!" he said, when the six wizards stood once more in front of him. "That is quite good magic you did—but it is easy to work the magic that you know. Do three things that I

command you, and I will be your servant."

The six wizards frowned.

"What are your three things?" they demanded. "Have a care lest you try us too far, bold youth. You will perhaps find yourself in the cage with those birds yonder before very long."

"Then you will lose a good servant," said the youth. "Now these are my three tests. First, can you make yourselves invisible?"

The wizards laughed scornfully. They spread out their hands, said a curious magic word, and lo and behold! they had disappeared! Their chairs were empty!

"Very clever!" said the youth. The wizards suddenly appeared again, and sat down in their chairs.

"What is your second test?" they asked.

"The second test is—multiply yourselves by three!" said the youth. In a trice the wizards had turned into eighteen, and surrounded the youth in a ring. He didn't turn a hair, but waved his hand to tell them to become six again.

"Now your last test," said the wizards.

"Ah!" said the youth. "This a test that but few wizards can do."

He set out six candles in candle-sticks on a table. "Now," said he, "turn yourselves into the six flames of my candles."

With a scornful laugh the wizards disappeared, and in a trice six red flames appeared at the top of the six candles, burning steadily.

"Ha!" said the youth, mockingly. "Very clever!" Then, lightly and easily, he blew at each candle in turn. Puff! Out went one flame. Puff! Out went another. Puff! Out went a third. Puff! Puff! Puff! Out went the fourth, fifth and sixth —and where were the six wizards? Gone out with the candle-flames! They had had no time to take their own shape again, and they were blown out for good. To this day no one has ever heard of them again.

"Ho ho!" laughed the youth, flinging the candles to the floor. "That's the end of the red wizards! Now this castle is mine and all the treasure in it! Tomorrow I shall be made a prince and the lovely princess will be mine!"

Then he noticed that the birds in the cage were all clamouring to be set free. He opened the cage door and they flew out. No sooner were they free than each bird disappeared and became the young man he had been before. Then one and all crowded round the youth, and swore to be his faithful servants.

What merry-making there was in the town of Mumble and in the whole of Fairyland that night! The news flew from place to place, and the king and queen came themselves in great state to see the wonderful youth who had defeated the six powerful wizards.

And next day the wedding bells rang out merrily, for the princess herself came to marry the youth. When she saw his twinkling eyes and black curly hair she was glad, and smiled at him. He smiled gaily at his lovely bride, and so with glad hearts they were married, and lived happily ever after.

The Flyaway Broomstick

There was once a most annoying pixie called Poppo, who lived in Wobble Village on the borders of Fairyland. He was annoying because he was always borrowing things, and never returning them.

"It is such a nuisance," said one small pixie to another. "That naughty Poppo borrowed my only kettle yesterday, and now he says he didn't. So I have had to buy a new kettle!"

"And I had to buy a new set of dusters," complained another. "I hung mine out on the line, and Poppo came and borrowed them all without asking me. Then he said he never did, so I had to go out and spend all my money on new ones."

"If only he wasn't so powerful," sighed a third. "But we daren't refuse him, or scold him, because he knows more magic than any of us."

"Yes, and do you remember how he turned little Sylfay into a worm because she told him he wasn't a borrower, he was a robber?" said the first one. "We can't do anything, you know."

But matters got so bad that the village knew they would have to do *something*. Poppo borrowed, or took without asking, all their nicest things. He would never give them back, and often said he had never had them at all. The little folk were in despair.

"I will go to the Wise Woman on top of Breezy Hill," said Chippy, the leader. "She will perhaps be able to help us."

So he went off the next morning, and told his tale to the old Wise Woman. She listened, and for a time said nothing.

"You must be careful," she said. "This Poppo is quite a powerful pixie."

"I know," sighed Chippy. "But surely, oh Wise Woman, you can think of some way to stop him?"

The Wise Woman thought again. Then she smiled. She went to a cupboard, and took out a long broom.

"I have an idea," she said. "Take this broomstick home with you, Chippy. It once belonged to a witch and flies in the air. There is a fly-away spell hidden in it that will take twelve people for a flight and bring them back safely. But the thirteenth flight takes it to the witch it once belonged to, and she will keep for a servant the thirteenth rider."

"Ooh!" said Chippy, frightened. "Well, what are we to do?"

"Fly it in front of Poppo's house," said the Wise Woman. "Let twelve pixies, one after another, have a ride, and stop. Put it somewhere so that Poppo can borrow it—and if he doesn't fly off to the witch, then I am no Wise Woman!"

Chippy grinned in delight, and hurried off to Wobble

Village with the fine broomstick. He whispered all about it to the others, and in great glee they went to Poppo's cottage.

"I'll have first ride," said Chippy. He sat astride the broomstick and waited. Suddenly it rose into the air, circled round the tree-tops, shot up high, and then glided gently down to the ground again.

"Fine! Fine!" cried all the watching pixies.

"Someone else can have a turn now," said Chippy. He slid off, and another pixie leapt on. Up rose the broomstick again, and away it went over the tree-tops.

When the fifth ride was being taken, Chippy saw Poppo looking out of his window, and grinned. Each of the pixies had a turn, but after the twelfth had been taken, Chippy stopped them.

"No more," he said. "It's tea-time. We must all go home. I must take my broom into my back-yard now, and use it for its proper purpose—sweeping!"

Off they all went. Poppo watched them go. He badly wanted a ride, but he wasn't going to say so. No, he would go to Chippy to ask him for the loan of his broom, and say that he wanted to sweep out his backyard.

So after tea he put on his hat, and went round to Chippy's cottage. Chippy was watching for him, for he felt sure he would come.

"Good evening, Chippy," said Poppo. "Would you be so good as to lend me a broom?"

"Ha ha! You want to ride on it!" said Chippy, pointing his finger at him.

"Indeed I don't," said Poppo, looking offended. "I want to sweep my backyard."

"Well, I warn you—if you ride on it, you'll be taken off to the witch who owns it!" said Chippy, who felt it would not be fair to let Poppo have the broom without a warning. "No, Poppo—I think I won't lend it to you, after all."

Poppo scowled, and went off. Chippy watched him. Soon the mean little pixie returned by the back way, creeping quietly into the backyard, where he had spied the broom. He meant to take it without permission.

He ran off with it. Chippy whistled to his friends, and they all went softly after Poppo to watch what would happen.

"I said he wasn't to borrow it, and I warned him what would happen if he rode on it," said Chippy. "It will be his own fault if he is spirited away. He said he just wanted to sweep out his backyard."

The pixies peeped over the wall. Poppo had the broom by the kitchen-door, and he was looking at it carefully.

"All the other pixies had a ride, so I don't see why I shouldn't, too," said Poppo. "That warning of Chippy's was all made up—he just said it so that I shouldn't have a nice ride like the others!"

He jumped on the broomstick. At once it rose into the air. It circled three times round the tree-tops, rose very high—and then went off like a streak of lightning to the west where the old witch lived!

"Ooh! He's gone!" cried the pixies.

So he had; and as he never came back, I suppose the witch took him for her servant, and he is probably there still. The pixies were delighted to be rid of him. They went to his cottage, and took away all the things that Poppo had borrowed and forgotten to return.

"Good old Wise Woman!" said Chippy. "I'll bake her a cake this Saturday, and take it to her!"

He did—and she was simply delighted.

A book full of Enid Blyton's special magic – and mischief, adventure and fun with pixies and elves, fairies and wizards, girls and boys, animals and toys. These stories are ideal for happy bedtimes.

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